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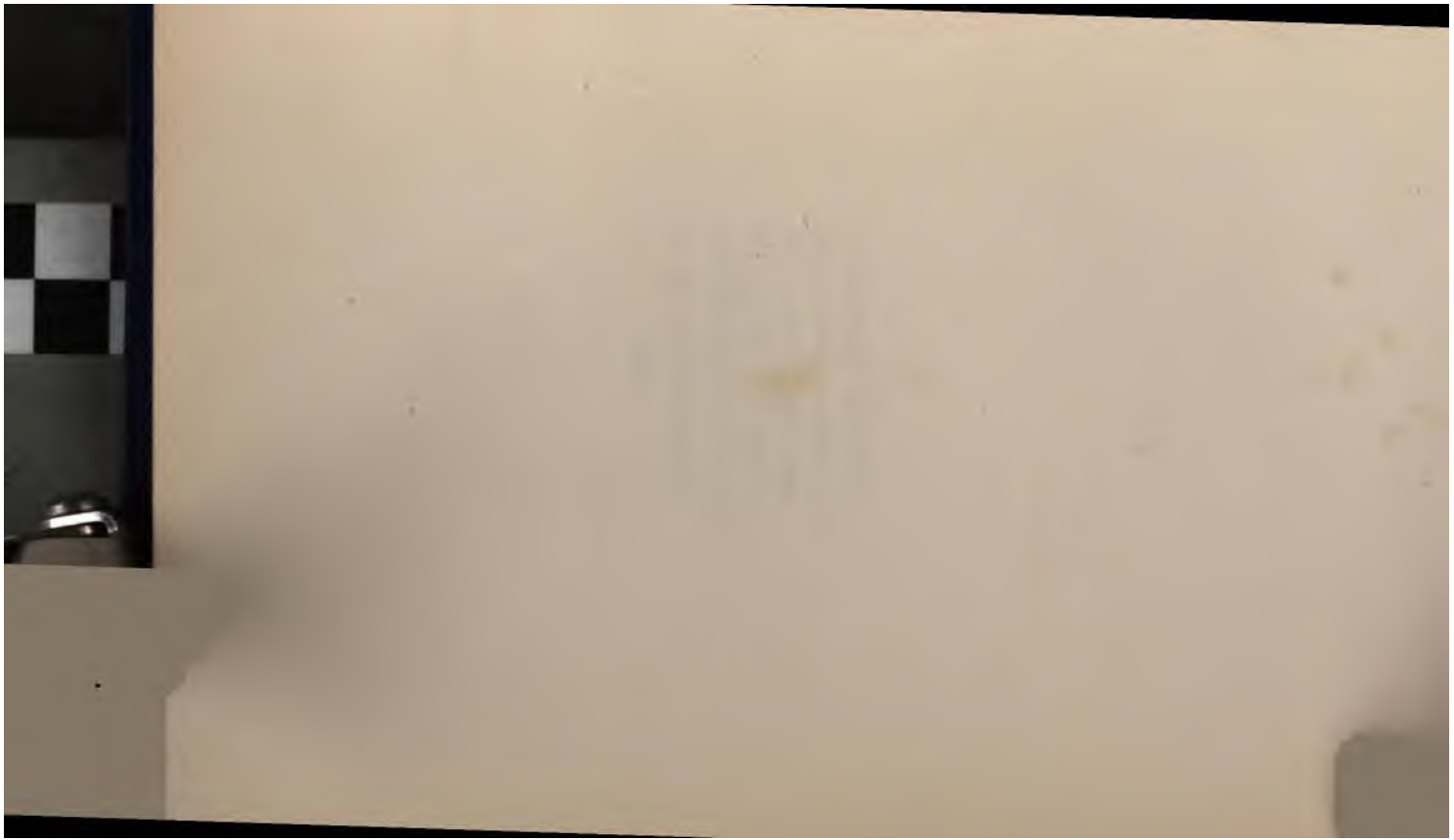
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To

OWEN PHILLIPS, Esq.

THIS SKETCH OF A CRUISE IN SOME OF THE FINE SHIPS OF THE COMPANY OVER WHICH HE SO ABLY PRESIDES IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED





INTRODUCTION

In the following pages I have endeavoured to recall my experiences during a trip to the West Indies and around the Spanish Main, not exactly as an ordinary tourist, although on the tourist route. I say not exactly as an ordinary tourist, first, because many of the places I had visited before when pursuing my calling as a sailor; and secondly, because the tourist season was really over. No one pretends that this part of the world is a desirable place to visit during the summer solstice, but during the winter it is delightful beyond the power of language to describe. But I want to make it perfectly clear that I was the guest of the great Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, whose hospitality to me was more generous and farther-reaching than I could ever have dreamed of receiving. Yet I would like to make it clear too, if possible, that I have subdued my natural bias in favour of the Company, so that I have written only what I believe to be literally and exactly true. That statement will no doubt be read with reservations. Yet I feel sure

that those who will do me the honour to read my book will feel that I have endeavoured at any rate to act up to my convictions, and that I really have written in a quite independent spirit.

Here, at any rate, I can assert, without any fear of contradiction, that the Company has allowed me a perfectly free hand. I have received no instructions, or even hints, that I should write thus and so. Consequently I have written just as I felt, and I hereby declare that for my personal opinions, very freely expressed, the Company is in no way responsible.

Another thing, the political and social and economical aspect of the West Indies has been laid before me; and if I had felt it my duty to do so, I could have compiled with great ease a great book, half of which would have been statistics, a quarter of it views of other people, and the rest just connective writing. I have done nothing of the kind. Conceiving that my book should be an expression of my opinions upon the tour, and that such matter as can easily be obtained from guide-books ought to have no place in it, I have written as I felt inclined—whether well or ill of course is a matter which the public will soon find out. If it be said that I have been unduly severe in dealing with the United States, Germany, or the Central American republics, I say respectfully, but firmly, that I have only written what I know

to be true and without the slightest regard to consequences. Too long, I know, have Englishmen truckled to the United States and Germany; too long have they allowed the fungus Governments of Central America to flout England while subservient to the United States and Germany, and it is really high time that some one spoke out.

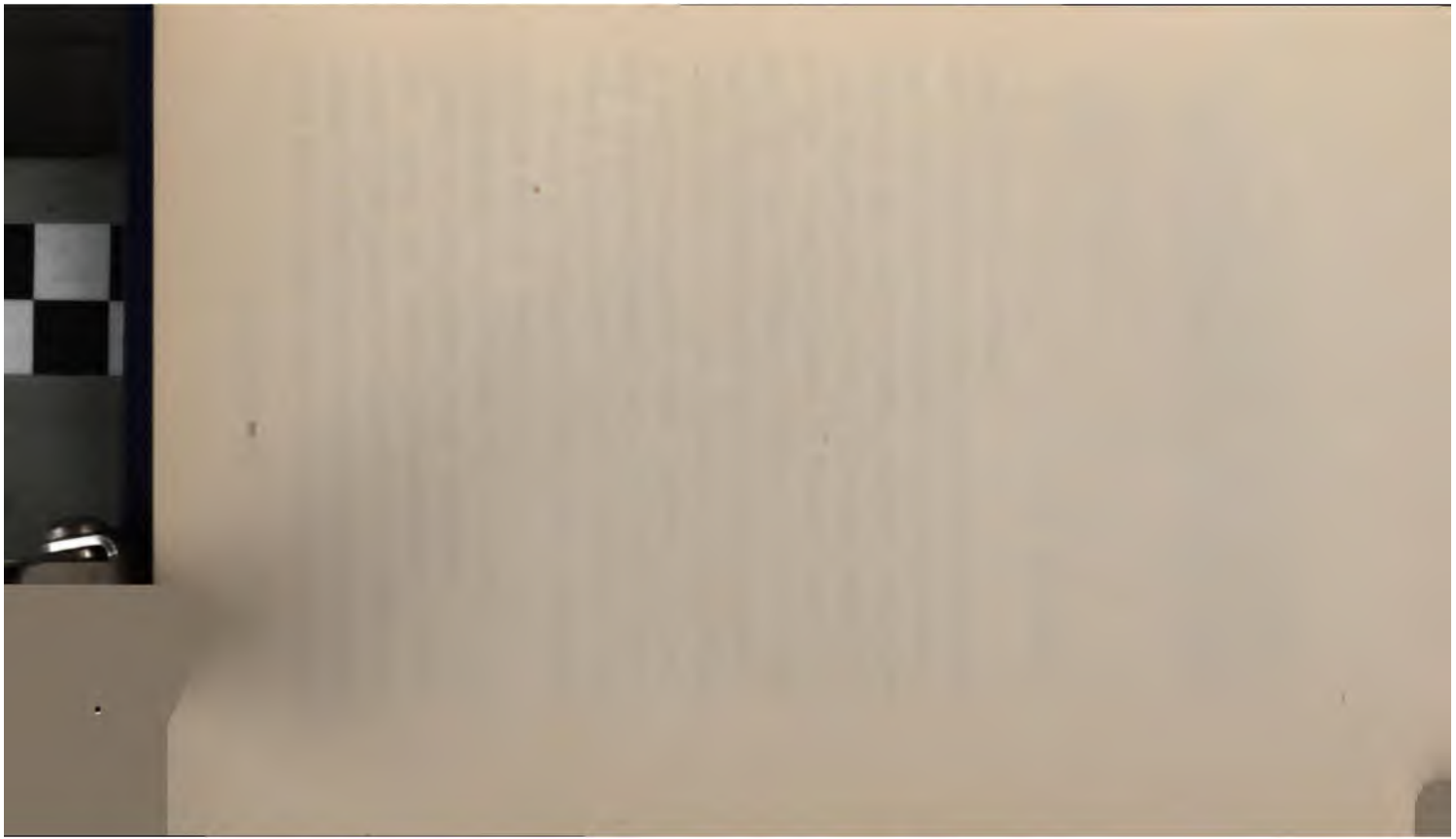
I could have wished many times that the national aspects of the trip had not forced themselves upon my notice, and compelled me to write about them. It would have been so much pleasanter to have written only on the West Indies from the point of view of the pleasure-seeker. Well, I hope I have made that side clear too—that I know of no trip likely to afford a more solid return in renewed health and wider outlook upon the world than that offered by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. And with this I make my bow and leave my book to the public, which is, after all, the final court, and from whose decisions there is no appeal.

F. T. BULLEN.

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MELBOURN, CAMBS.

NOTE.—Since this book was finished the Postmaster-General has determined the mail contract with the R.M. Company, which now carries His Majesty's mails without any subsidy whatever.

F. T. B.





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BACK TO SUNNY SEAS

I

A PERFECT PASSAGE

"Oh, to be in England, now that April's here," sang Browning, and roundly has he often been jeered at for so doing. Not, alas! without good reason too often, for it must be confessed that the caprices of an English April, to say nothing of an English spring generally, are not seldom deadly in their effects upon weaklings. But this blessed April of 1904, from its beginning, had given us in the favoured county of Cambridgeshire no ground for a single grumble. The air had lost its keen edge, the sun really warmed us, and the showers which fell at night set all the young green things bounding upwards and outwards, impatient of their long detention in gloom and cold. Also it seemed as if they were anxious to try conclusions again with the abnormalities of our fickle climate and reward the long-suffering husbandmen for their patience and the wasted labour of the past year.

In consequence of this entirely satisfactory state of the elements there was just a tinge of regret mingled with our joy at the prospect of soon being in the regions of perpetual sunshine, so prone are we, happily, to forget the prospective in the present. The quaint and beautiful town of Southampton lay basking in the glorious sunshine, which reflected itself gladly in almost every face. The beautiful steamship *Tagus*, reposing quietly at her moorings, belied her four years of arduous service all round the world—(she was from the commencement of her life one of the most valued and useful troopships in the South African war)—for she really looked as if newly out of the hands of the builders, so bright, clean, fresh, and smooth were all her appointments. There is nothing to a seaman's eye that tells the tale of how a ship has been treated by her owners and officers than this general appearance of newness. I have been in a ship on her second voyage that looked twenty years old, and in one twenty years old that looked as does the *Tagus*, the difference being entirely due to the ability of the officers and the liberal wisdom of the owners of the latter ship. And before I leave this part of my subject I should like to record one notable impression. Had it not been made I should have said nothing at all on the matter. I have been of late years in several ocean liners, sometimes as ordinary passenger, and sometimes as guest of the Company, but I have never before been in a ship so

admirably well designed for passenger accommodation, comfort, and space as this one. I have been in ships more than twice her tonnage (she is 5,545 tons), ships especially designed too for first-class ocean travel, that did not appear half as roomy and comfortable, not even in the promenade deck spaces. Of course in the details of cabins, etc., there is now very little difference between one first-class ship and another, but in that sense of roominess and comfort so essential for the well-being of passengers in a hot climate my present ship ranks easily first in my experience. She reflects the greatest credit on the grand old firm of Napiers, her builders and designers.

There is to me one very striking feature about the departure of a modern ocean liner, which I do not think has received the attention that it deserves. The old stock phrase, once inevitable in describing such events—"all was bustle and confusion"—would now be entirely out of place because false. Whether it is because people generally are more accustomed to travel, or by reason of an increase in the national quality of self-control, or a sense of the magnitude of the interests involved in such an event, or a combination of all three reasons I do not know, but it is certain that the departure of an ocean liner full of passengers for the other side of the globe is now attended with less than one-tenth of the excitement, fuss, and general bewilderment to be witnessed any

day, say at Victoria, during the holiday season among people about to take a journey of two or three hours' duration. Of course there is an enormous difference in the quality of those responsible, as one would naturally expect; but not so much as to account for the all-pervading air of semi-lunacy obtaining at the railway station and the quiet self-possession of the people at the pier.

Our departure was no exception to this universal rule. The comings and goings of the porters, the stewards, the friends, and the dock people all seemed to be controlled by the calm demeanour, almost amounting to nonchalance, of the commander, who, like some ducal host, stands to receive his guests, bid them welcome to his grand ship, and by a few well-chosen words make them feel absolutely at home. I have heard nincompoops ashore uttering asinine comments upon the character and behaviour of what they are graciously pleased to call "a mere merchant seaman." I am an exceedingly patient man; I make no boast of the fact, because I was born so, I couldn't help it; but I contritely confess that when I hear such remarks I feel homicidal. I am so impatient of the fact that so many otherwise kindly disposed people look upon the merchant seaman as a rough and uncouth brute, who is bound to commit solecisms and do outrageous things which are forgiven pitifully because the poor thing doesn't know any better.

Ladies and gentlemen, in historic phrase, "let us clear our minds of cant." The seafaring profession does not make cads, it makes 'men; and modern steamship faring makes the most perfectly finished gentlemen under heaven. Beneath that genial, elegant exterior presented to Messieurs et Mesdames the passengers there lies the *man* who is responsible, whose skill, resourcefulness, and courage make ocean travel so pleasant. You are so apt to take things as a matter of course, so apt to forget, as you lie wearily tossing in your bunks throughout a heavy sea at night, that if you are suffering the pangs of sea-sickness, there are men and brethren below you, twenty feet below, toiling furiously to keep steam in the boilers that the good ship may thrust her way through the weariless seas into the fine weather for which you yearn. Do, lady and gentlemen passengers, bestow an occasional kindly thought upon your brothers beneath, in barest justice.

The foregoing outburst because of an evil sprite who hurled at us an old W.S.W. swell of gigantic dimensions. End on to it, the pleasant *Tagus* made the best weather she could, but, alas! the unseasoned ones blenched before that mighty swell, and felt that for them henceforward life was a dreary blank. In vain did we pour soft words of hope into their weary ears; they turned hopeless eyes upon us, and "wished I hadn't come." Vain, too, were the promises we made

of better days immediately forthcoming, of golden seas and lucent skies. Optimism on our part was of no avail, since in them the black genius of pessimism reigned supreme. Indeed it is a waste of words, the kindly advice and comforting speeches addressed to sufferers from sea-sickness. Do I not know, I who speak, who on my last voyage, a seasoned sailor of fifteen years, was as seasick as any first-trip channel passenger? What to me were all the kind or unkind things said at such times but idle wind? Enough: gallantly the *Tagus* breasted the enormous swell left by an old gale, and hopelessly the sick ones awaited some relief. It came, as it always does, all the sweeter for being unexpected, and, on the third day, behold us a united family, ready to be friendly with anybody for that we were so glad to find ourselves still alive and well.

That blissful Saturday passed like a dream, and ushered in a Sunday even more delightful. A limpid sea of deepest azure, a gentle, cool breeze, just sufficient motion to remind us that we were at sea and not in populous city pent, and the delight of congenial company, every face wearing a smile. And now I come to an experience of which I hardly dare trust myself to write. Divine service was fixed for 10.30 as usual; but to my amazement and utter delight, officers, sailors, firemen, and stewards trooped down into the saloon to participate. Many such services

have I attended, but never one like this. My heart swelled as I looked around upon those weather-beaten faces, and realized to the full how good and pleasant a thing it was for them all to be gathered in brotherly association to listen to the same great truths, the same eternal aspirations. Putting it on the lowest ground, how good it is to let your men know that in the sight of God they are your brethren, albeit the accidents of fortune, birth, or what not have placed you above them socially. Honestly, in all my varied experience of spiritual work, I have never enjoyed a service more, and I shall think the better of this Company all my life because I have learned that this is their invariable custom. I have written very bitterly upon this subject, my remarks being based upon experience; but I am therefore the more delighted to chronicle this fragrant change in my knowledge of matters maritime.

Having paid tribute to Neptune in the shape of three days exceeding liveliness as the buoyant ship faced that great old swell, we receive our reward by entering upon the halcyon sea—the central North Atlantic, which is one of the most beautiful places in the world. And, in these hustling, busy days, few indeed are the passages one may make in any direction where the beautiful weather is so soon, so easily reached, and where it remains so steadfastly lovely for such a lengthened period. Bound to the westward direct, say to any port on the North American littoral, and

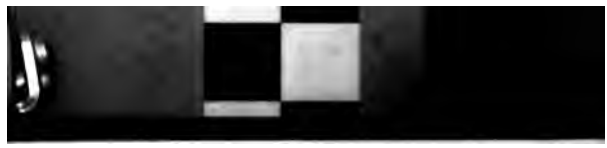


at whatever time of the year you make the passage, you are liable, if not to actually bad weather, certainly to unpleasantness such as fog, heavy swells, alternations of cold and heat, etc. Go to the east, the Mediterranean has as many moods as an Italian coquette, and although variety be charming, such variety as that becomes irksome when dealing with the sea. Then if you be bound further East, the sweltering ditch of Suez greets you, followed by the torrid, blistering blasts of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Sea. If you go farther yet—to Australia or New Zealand, the southern Indian Ocean will bless your parched and weary frame with such delicious weather as we now enjoy, but it is a long way to go to earn that little respite.

No! for those who travel in search of health, even if they must go in the middle of summer, I would say emphatically, go to Barbados direct, and come back by the next ship. You will have almost a month of weather as nearly perfect as this dear earth affords. In winter, of course, you should cruise the islands, but I must not anticipate. If only I could draw you a satisfying word-picture of to-day! The mighty circle of sea, just gently rippled by the tender breath of the nascent N.E. Trade Wind—(of course the Trade Wind doesn't really begin until within the Tropic of Cancer, but when did ever a sailor fail to call the first settled wind below 35° either N. or S. of the line the Trades?)

—the sky above, not yet of that deep, dark blue it will take on later, but of the most delicate shade, tempering the sun's ardent rays by a filmy veil invisibly spread for our benefit, and the graceful sailing cumulus clouds, like tufts of snowiest fleece, all help to form this picture, which in its entirety baffles all description. For who can present to the senses that delightful atmosphere of purity and freshness, the flood of light bathing all things in a golden glow, the solemn sensation of peace which comes even to the most thoughtless, if only they will step aside from their fellows for a little while and let the ocean speak to them?

I always feel that it is a pity people need so much exercise at sea. I know it is necessary, although I am sure it is overdone by some restless souls who seem never satisfied unless they are arranging, conducting, or inventing some form of playful activity. At sea, of all places in the wide world, when personal comfort is absolutely assured as it is here, one can cultivate the almost lost art of meditation. Reading is not easy except after going to bed, and then there are few who can read aught but the lightest of literature. But sit silently hour after hour gazing, with sight-strengthening effect, out over the wide, smiling sea. Its "many-dimpled smile," the multitudinous flashings of the tiny crests where the infant wavelets break, will exercise an almost hypnotic effect. So, too,



does the aspect of the sky, each gliding cloud passing with ever-changing contour across the infinite blue, beneficent spirits engaged on errands essential to the well-being of man. Presently the sense of propinquity with one's fellows is lost, the throb of the engines becomes unfelt, the consciousness of the ship disappears, and the soul is alone with immensity, the vast solemnity of Nature in her highest form and grandest mood encompasses us, and we soar into unfamiliar regions, think new thoughts, learn a new language, receive an education undreamed of in the philosophy of the schools.

But, alas! though we should love the highest when we see it, such a privilege as this is too often neglected by us, we suffer incalculable loss—the absence of that perfect Elysium of the mind from which we may return to the daily round and common task of life not merely refreshed, re-energized, and informed, but ennobled. Could we but realize this we should no longer wish to rush madly from place to place complaining of delay, and intolerant of the slightest hindrance to swift progress, but use the healing of the sea in its intended way. And in so doing we need never—we should never—lose sight of the all-important fact that in order to perfect our enjoyment of this privilege men must toil, devise, and suffer night and day. Nor should we, if we do remember this fact, attempt to dismiss it from our minds with the callous remark, "Well, they

are paid for it: it is their business." Faithful, unwearying attention such as theirs is never rewarded adequately by monetary payment, however lavish; but I fear it is seldom appreciated at its real worth, and we only get some idea of its value when we get bad or perfunctory service. However, though this is a topic upon which I feel very deeply, I am quite aware of the difficulty of getting the majority of people to see eye to eye with me, and so will leave it.

Crossing the North Atlantic diagonally from east to west—from the Azores to the Antilles—means traversing a vast expanse of silent sea, almost as empty of traffic as the South Atlantic from Ascension to nearly Fernando Noronha, which is, I suppose, as unfrequented a sea as any in the world, save the lonely Antarctic. For instance, we have now been eight days in finest, clearest weather, and we have seen one ship —a disconsolate-looking four-masted barque, to all appearance a forlorn survival of the great white-winged fleets of the past. And, indeed, in a swift steamship the ocean seems lonelier than it really is. The fauna of the sea—even the flying fish—show themselves most infrequently, so that the sight of a whale, even of a good school of porpoises, is an event to be entered in a diary as an uncommon sight. As for bonito, dolphin, albacore, *et hoc genus omne*, one may look in vain for them, for the throb of the propeller keeps them effectually beyond the range of vision. But

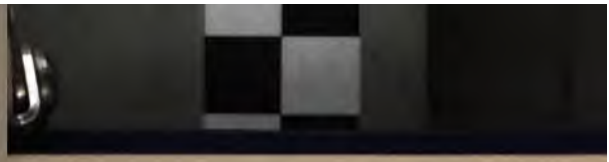


what of all this? the glorious, age-old, ever young sea is all-sufficient for the needs of the weary mind, the body revolting against the incessant round of unchanging activities. In spite of repeating myself, I must say again that this is the most sumptuous and efficacious rest-cure possible. If it were only available to more of our overworked and underpaid servants of a strenuous civilization!

Rather strangely, considering the time of year, the North-East Trades are exceedingly light, barely sufficient to keep the sails of a heavily sparred sailing ship distended. Just the weather to give the highest contentment to the company of a ship like this, and to cause the deepest disgust and annoyance to the crew of a windjammer which has been perchance hauled up among the doldrums, the light winds, variables, and calms of the line; and now, when hoping to make up for some lost time, finding that the Trade Wind—that permanent feature of the tropics all round the world—has failed them. No mere words can do justice to their disappointment and discontent. But, alas! when all one's own ways are so pleasant that even the proverbial crumpled rose-leaf would cause a tremor of indignant amazement, it is indeed difficult to sympathize with others whose situation is as unpleasant as ours is the reverse. More, I fear that even the most benevolent among us do occasionally feel the force of the cynical Frenchman's remark that "there

is something not unpleasing in witnessing the misfortunes of our friends."

That crumpled rose-leaf has found me in a most unexpected and, for a passenger, an unusual spot. I realize that this halcyon passage is near its close. I could wish it prolonged—most selfishly, as I am probably the only person on board who is not already conscious of a desire for a change. They begin to feel what is so unrighteously termed the monotony of the sea when applied to such a passage as this. Poor people! had they been battering at a savage westerly off Cape Horn for forty days, with never a break in the lowering, leaden sky, with all consciousness that such a condition of body as comfort could exist departed, aching with bruises, smarting with sea-sores, hunger-sick and hopeless of any change—the use of the word monotony in connection with such perfect conditions of life as this would strike them as little short of blasphemy against the benevolent Providence which had suffered them to live and enjoy it. Or, to take another such instance, but much milder: having reached, after a four or five months' passage from the East Indies, a position say five hundred miles west of Ushant, to be met by a hard, easterly wind—hard because of the perfect, steel-blue sky and brilliant sunshine—accompanying a blistering blast that bites into the very marrow of the brittle bones, and congeals the thin blood of the seafarers only a few days emerged



from tropical heats. Scurvy has revived all old aches and sores; officers and men are alike sick to death of each other's society, but have recently grown slightly more amenable to softer feelings; and now this shuts down upon them, effectually barring them from home. Black despondency grips them, and they set their teeth hopelessly, forgetting, if they can, that ever they enjoyed their lives, and may do again.

But there, I do not mean to scold those who have been happy enough to escape from what used to be one of the commonest evils of a seafarer's lot. I only wish to try and show by contrast how discontent with an almost ideal condition of things, such as this, is in the highest degree ungrateful, is, in fact, tempting the Higher Powers to withdraw their benevolence from us and give us some solid ground for complaint. One grievance I certainly have against the ordinary passenger, not merely as a seafarer myself, but as a fellow-passenger. It is that he will not, even to save himself from being bored to death by inaction of mind and body, take any interest in what one may call the polity of the ship in which he sails. How the vast and complicated machine devised and prepared for his service by the best intellectual and practical ability of our time is kept running so smoothly in all its component parts. How, from the time of the vessel's leaving home until her return, whether at sea or in harbour, some portion of the crew are ever at

work planning, doing, for the comfort and security of those committed to their charge. What they do, how they do it, and why? All these things should afford much pleasant and profitable mental exercise to the passenger, the result being inevitably that he would unconsciously learn to appreciate the way in which these splendid vessels are managed, a way that I, in all my experience, have never seen equalled outside of the navy. The mere watching of the working of this ship is to me a never-ending source of wonder and delight, the smoothness with which the human machinery runs being only comparable to the perfect operation of the main engines, the hydraulic cranes lifting their tons in apparently effortless silence, and the velvet velocity of the dynamos. I will not dare to say that there is no friction between officers and men, but I do assert that I have seen no evidence of any; the work goes steadily forward in the same manner as the ship is brought alongside of and leaves the wharves, that is, without a voice being raised beyond an ordinary conversational tone. And, beyond the necessary interpreters among the waiters, there is scarcely a foreigner in the ship, even the chef, to my great delight, being English, and a credit to his profession.

But here I must come to a sudden stop, for the ship is within sight of the loyal and beautiful little island of Barbados, and a whole host of memories are



surging through my brain of the last time, nearly a quarter of a century ago, when I saw these shores. I will put away my manuscript, and go on deck to enjoy the spectacle of the *Tagus* picking up her buoy punctually to the advertised hour.



II

BARBADOS THE LOYAL

BEYOND and above the delight I feel at standing once more on deck at the breaking of the day and watching the well-remembered outlines of little Barbados gradually growing distinct in the pearly light, is the recollection of the really great part played by the island in the fortunes of the West Indies. Loyal with a blind, unreasoning loyalty, speaking of themselves as more English than the English, the Barbadians, whether white or black, are, perhaps, as intensely patriotic as any people under the sun. Why this should be so I do not pretend to speculate, I can only note the existence of a strange fact, one that must be reckoned with in all our dealings with the West Indies. A few moments' thought about the matter breeds great wonder why it should be so. For it will be remembered that, in the bad old days of our history, even those who fought and died for the freedom we now enjoy were not averse, when opportunity offered, from sending their own white countrymen and women,



whom the fortune or accident of war had delivered into their hands, out here as slaves. Yes, slaves; to toil under this blazing, tropical sun, and live upon such coarse and miserable food as the avarice of those who purchased them would allow. One would naturally expect to find in the descendants of people thus used a fierce, deep-seated hatred of the land that could thus use her children, or at the best some such feeling as that possessed by American citizens of British and Dutch descent towards England to-day. I mean the feeling that prompts them to teach in their schools the daily lesson of hatred and contempt for England, and to dwell with never-fading delight upon the fact that they "whipped us," as they put it.

But in spite of the past, and of the long neglect which, after our bungling fashion, we have accorded to our most loyal colonies, the Barbadians love the old country with a deep-seated affection which nothing seems able to weaken in the least degree. And this it is, more than anything else, which makes the little island so very interesting to a thoughtful Briton. I must hasten to say, however, that this by no means exhausts its attractions, it rather only accentuates them. Owing to its position in what may justly be called the heart of the North-East Trade Winds and the configuration of the land it is the healthiest place possessed by us, of any note, within the tropics. I



am quite well aware that you will see upon the old tombstones, dating back over two hundred years, many allusions to the "deadly climate," but one must steadily bear in mind the way in which people lived in those days, and transfer the blame to them from the climate.

And now I beg to inform you, courteous reader, that I am not going to write a guide-book; there are many excellent works of that kind easily available. I wish only to record my impressions of this tour, from the point of view of the passenger in search of health, rest, and change, with such additions from time to time as experience may suggest. So with this caution we will, if you please, return to the point at which the last chapter closed, viz., our arrival at Carlisle Bay at daybreak.

While enjoying most keenly the view as daylight strengthened, I was greatly amused, but withal somewhat saddened, to notice how persistently a large class of travellers will worry themselves into a perfect fever, without the slightest cause, upon and before arriving at their destination. You meet them everywhere, on train journeys, coming to Euston, say, they will be fussing and fidgeting about before arriving at Willesden, and will stand, their hands full of parcels or bags, ready to leap upon the platform before the train stops, and work themselves almost into a fit of madness over supposed losses of luggage. That they are usually

far later in getting away from the station than the deliberate passenger, who does not stir until the train stops, never seems to occur to them, any more than does the obvious fact that the saving of five minutes, if possible, would be dearly bought by the waste of tissue necessary for such feverish restlessness. In like manner you shall see, upon the arrival of one of our cross-channel steamers, an almost frantic rushing and crushing to get ashore, in spite of the contemptuous warning of the officials and the repeated assurance that there is really no hurry, the train will not leave until all passengers have disembarked.

So in like manner and equal foolishness is it here. Instead of remembering that they are abroad for pleasure, and that hurry and worry are the two sworn foes of anything like enjoyment, behold the tourist at least an hour before there is the slightest necessity for preparation, standing fully panoplied, and loaded with light articles, feverishly tapping the deck with one foot and mopping his streaming brow at intervals, as if the ship were about to dash into the harbour at sixty miles an hour and, hardly giving him time to get into a boat, turn round, and speed to sea again. I do verily believe that such folly as this does more to spoil a holiday than anything else, and is, moreover, in tropical countries, distinctly dangerous. The officials on board ship to-day, with but few exceptions, are far too careful of the interests of those they are

employed to look after, to leave any loophole for delay and discomfort. Therefore please, dear fellow-tourist, don't hurry and don't worry. Having superintended the packing of your impedimenta, if you are leaving the ship here, and dressed for going ashore, stand and enjoy the busy scene, snuff up the strange new scent of this sunny island, and watch the ebullient negro eager to do you some service to be rewarded in current coin.

As the *Tagus* steamed grandly up to her buoy and was made fast, I noted with some surprise that there were three huge sailing-ships in harbour, deep laden, and, sailor-like, I fell a-wondering what they could be doing here. Because it was absurd to suppose that they had got that immense mass of cargo here, or that they had brought it for discharge here, under the present conditions of trade. But it was not until I met the genial Superintendent of the Royal Mail Company that the mystery was explained, and another instance afforded of the wonderful ramifications of world trade. They were sugar ships from Java which, in the unsettled condition of the sugar market, had been ordered here as a good centre from which they might sail with all despatch to the most profitable market upon receipt of telegraphic advices; to the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, or the continent of Europe. Also there was a survival of a bygone day, an old clumsy-looking barque from New

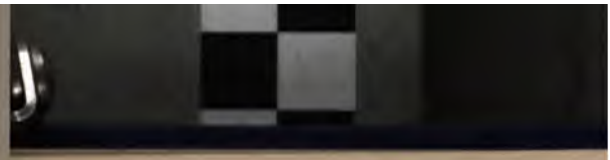


Bedford on a sperm-whaling expedition, whose appearance carried me back in spirit over most of the seas of the round world. The ubiquitous German steamer was also there, and an Italian groping for cargo. But what pleased me best was the appearance of the yacht-like inter-island steamers of this Company, so gracefully elegant in their lines that it was hard to credit them with two thousand and odd tons' capacity. I find it hard occasionally not to draw comparisons, and only succeed by putting a strong restraint upon myself, but I may be permitted to say that, of all the companies I know who keep what we call "station boats" employed, the Royal Mail may be congratulated upon having the prettiest and best kept up for the passenger service. The *Eden*, *Esk*, and *Solent* would be admired anywhere; of their comfort from the passengers' point of view I know nothing yet, but shall have full experience by-and-by, as I am booked for a month in the first-named.

Comes to add to the bewilderment and further unrest of the passengers before named a flotilla of boats, each with its sable occupants screaming for patronage in choice negrese (for I find I have to coin a word to express the quaintness of the negro dialect), and ready apparently to divide the prospective passenger piecemeal in order to get a share of his custom. Come, also, the dorys of the diving-boys, who to the untravelled beholder are really great fun,

causing one to forget that water really can drown by the way in which they behave in its instability. But presently the tourist, even for the first-time tourist, is made aware that beneath this chaos the forces of order have been at work; men he has never seen, humble servants of his that he will not be called upon to recognize financially or otherwise, have been labouring on his behalf, and he has only to get into a boat and be rowed ashore to find that, except for the inevitable wonder at the strangeness of all surrounding scenes, his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace—comparatively so, of course.

Here may I interpolate a remark to the effect that the tourist in quest of strange scenes, of utter change, and whose purse does not permit such a costly journey as that to the far East, may find, will find, in these our West Indian possessions, sufficient of marvel, of mystery, and of utter difference from anything to which he has hitherto been accustomed, to compensate him for not being able to go farther afield. Why, even the far East has here been brought to your door—but I am in Barbados, and must not suggest that in face of the loyal and industrious 'Badian black man, the coolie and the "chink," *anglicè* "Chinaman," are permitted here. The latter will be found in sufficient numbers before we are much more acquainted with the strange West.



Thirty years ago, when I first landed at the carenage (canash) of Barbados, I was utterly bewildered by the amount of animation exhibited by the people, by the strangeness of everything around me, and by the all-embracing heat. The latter, indeed, as compared with what is felt on board the ship, is at first rather alarming to the novice in the tropics. But there is really no reason for alarm, as I soon found, or even discomfort, if only the commonest precautions suggested by prudence be observed. I have seen on this cruise a young man go ashore in Barbados in an ordinary suit of dittoes and a cloth cap. When I met him he was almost in a state of collapse through the heat, and actually wondered why. One would have thought that his personal sensations would have been sufficient to warn him from so foolish a course. To the ordinary person, however, who has summer clothes, the weather presents no terrors, and, by taking things quietly, little or no inconvenience is felt. This is a topic that will intrude itself when writing about these parts; but, having made passing allusion to it, I am determined henceforth to keep it at bay, since the more one dwells upon it the more troublesome it becomes, until it is quite easy to fancy the heat unendurable when it is really nothing of the sort.

To the student of history especially, Barbados should be intensely interesting. Driving along its beautiful roads, and enjoying the splendour of the

vegetation, especially the gorgeousness of the flowers, one cannot help but think of the white slaves to whom I alluded in the outset of this chapter. I must recall with feelings of utter horror the cruelty that doomed men and women of our own race to be sold like beasts, and used worse than beasts, in this tropical clime. Slavery is vile—has not one redeeming feature about it; but I often wonder whether the good people who are shrieking about what by an utter abuse of language they are calling proposed Chinese slavery in the Transvaal ever are conscious of the entire lack of proportion in their ideas. It is so easy to exhaust one's vocabulary of abuse upon a trivial object, and have none left to use when real occasion arises. The sight of a *bonâ fide* slavery such as it has often been my lot to witness, would, I venture to believe, lead these really good people to modify their exaggerated language, carefully calculated for them by unscrupulous demagogues for the sole purpose of harassing political opponents, and that without the faintest regard for sincerity.

But perhaps this diatribe is somewhat beside the mark, and my only excuse for it must be the utter hatred I have for cant of all kinds, but especially political cant. Returning to a consideration of Barbados from an historical point of view, one is continually bound to wonder whether even under the lash the negro and white slaves worked as do the freemen of to-day. I have just met an antiquated-looking truck



laden with a hogshead of sugar, the net weight of which is always about a ton. This truck, heavy and cumbrous enough in itself to be a fairly awkward drag in roughly paved streets like these, is, with its immense burden, being dragged along by two negroes, a third manipulating a pair of shafts for steering in the rear. I am rather at a loss how to characterize their labour, for fear of being accused of exaggeration; but really under a northern sky I should call it terrific, to myself. In conveying cargo off to the ships, also, a most cumbrous, but immensely strong barge, capable of taking some twenty tons, is used. Now, during the most of the year the N.E. Trade Winds blow into Carlisle Bay with almost the force of a gale throughout the day; yet these huge boats are *rowed* off by four or five men working twenty-foot scaffold poles flattened at the ends. To row a mile like that, against a heavy wind and sea, is a task that seems impossible of performance; yet it is daily done, and nobody is surprised. But to see the muscular effort put forth by these negroes, from the time they leave the carenage, or river, until they arrive at the ship, should inspire a wholesome respect, not merely for their strength, but for their powers of endurance and obvious willingness to put those powers to the proof. There is certainly nothing of the "lazy nigger" about them. In fact, I discover in this extreme capacity for the hardest work and cheapness of labour a most potent reason for the backwardness of some

West India Islands, notably Barbados in the struggle, for existence. Ancient, cumbrous, and lengthy methods are still used for the two reasons given in the beginning of this sentence. There is also a third which, whether advanced by prudential suggestions or philanthropic motives, is equally praiseworthy. It is that work, and consequently food, must be found for the teeming population; and if a sudden influx of capital were to result in the displacement of the human labour by the introduction of machinery some very serious social complications would be certain to ensue. Things would adjust themselves in time, no doubt, but during that time there is equally no doubt that distress and disturbance would assume alarming proportions.

I know of no place in the world—certainly not even in the southern States of America—where the curious spectacle of white and black people equally native to the soil, equally acclimatized, and in perfect accord with each other, may be seen as here. In the absence of any direct statistics, I must assume that many of the whites are descendants of English slaves sent over here under the infamous old system in vogue two hundred years ago. Some must, of course, be descendants of planters who have come down in a double sense to the social status of the field negro. But by some peculiar latent pride of race these poor whites—at least, a very large number of them—have absolutely refused to miscegenate. One look at them



is sufficient to show that no African blood has ever mingled with theirs, and, though burnt a lively red by exposure to the sun, their hair, features, and eyes are perfectly and entirely British, while those of the women, who have been able to shade themselves a little, would, but for the curious 'Badian dialect, pass muster in any English town as English. This, too, is in face of the fact that in many negro families of five or six children with an absolutely black mother and pseudo-father there will be as many shades of colour as there are children. But this is a delicate subject, and I refrain from pursuing it farther.

Bearing the fact in mind that Barbados was practically the last discovered of all the West Indian Islands, or Caribbean Islands, as I should prefer to call them, rather than help to perpetuate the old misconception, there is, or should be, something fascinating in the consideration of its progress and in the contemplation of its cultivation. The tourist who arrives here will certainly, if he is wise, expend little precious time during the day in roaming the crowded, hot, and dusty streets of Bridgetown, but either by light railway or carriage get out into the country, where he will find much to interest, amuse, and instruct, and, what is also of great consequence, excellent accommodation in a few comfortable hotels. I need not go over the ground already so ably covered by the Royal Mail Company's guide-book in

pointing out where to go and where to stay, but observe that no one need be at a loss what to do, if only they will consult the Company's officials on the matter, their courtesy and attention to those confided to their care being proverbial. Of course, for the tourist who expects to be "cooked" (no pun intended), disappointment is waiting, and such persons will usually be found lounging in long chairs on the front verandah of the nearest hotel, looking inexpressibly bored, and apparently wondering why they came. Yet even they are unconsciously receiving much benefit from the warm air and strong life-giving breezes of this most healthful little island—the outpost of all the Caribbees, and from its geographical position the most perfectly aerated of them. Those who intend to obtain all the mental and physical good that such a wonderful trip as this can do them will never be at a loss for objects of interest and pleasure, for even driving along the roads one can study the domestic life of the people—can note how with a little cabin the size of an omnibus, propped up on a few blocks of coral from the damp of the ground, the proprietor manages to run quite an estate, having a patch of garden ground, a pig or two, some goats, fowls, and ducks, and even sometimes soaring to the possession of a calf and a well-groomed little donkey.

Into the much-vexed arena of politics I do not propose to enter. It does not commend itself to me



as a profitable study in such a series of sketches as I intend this to be. But I should be entirely false to my own convictions if I failed to point out how much evil has been done to Barbados in the past by the neglect and utter ignorance of successive Home Governments, and in spite of all the hard things that have been said about her planters, etc., she has managed to hold her own against the utterly unscrupulous attempts of Germany especially to destroy her trade. But America also intends her no good, unless she will transfer her affections to the United States, which is unlikely, and if effected would be of doubtful benefit to her. Also I must say that I feel grieved to see how deeply the splendid services of the Royal Mail Company in the past have been ignored, and pariah steamers of foreign origin, of perfectly loathsome condition, and run at about one-tenth of the expense per ton of this company, are allowed to come in and carry off the cargo from under the very bows of the mail ships. The competition is so entirely one-sided. These mail ships are well kept, well manned, well officered. In the vessel in which I am at present writing, of 1,300 tons register, there are a captain and four officers, a chief engineer and four juniors, a doctor, a purser, a chief steward, and at least fifty hands. And there is not one too many for the work to be done, for on the inter-island passage northward from Barbados neither captain nor crew can



reckon on a full watch's sleep, so rapid and arduous is the service, while its punctuality is to be implicitly relied upon. To think that this splendid service is often run without either profit or gratitude makes me feel very sad.



III

IN THE CARIBBEAN SEA

In attempting the description of a tour of this kind, there is always a distinct danger of repeating one's self, from the fact that some of the same places are visited again and again. True, such after-visits are usually *en passant*, but still fresh impressions of the same place are continually imprinting themselves upon the sensoria. Therefore, I feel it necessary to deprecate beforehand any accusation of repetition that may be made by pointing out the extreme possibility of saying the same things over again in a different way by reason of subsequent visits. But I can promise you, reader, that I will do all that in me lies to avoid this.

And now let us return to Carlisle Bay, Barbados, and make a fresh start. Our pleasant party, whose society has been so mutually delightful, is somewhat thinned, but enough of them remain to maintain still the kindly *Tagus* tradition under our genial skipper. We have shipped the first of the curiously conglomerate crowds of which we shall see so much during the next few weeks, and the study of their components,



Coloured Coquettes.



individually and collectively, is a source of great interest and often amusement. Also, we are forcibly reminded of Babel, not merely because of the echoes of German, French, Spanish, etc., but from the amazing varieties of negro perversions of English current among natives of the islands without consideration of colour. These dialects are enough to drive a precisian in language imbecile. For, not content with inflexions and intonations copious enough to turn a Chinese green with envy, every rule of grammar is systematically inverted, and the quaint *mélange* of speech is delivered at hurricane-like speed, making this pseudo-English quite as unintelligible as Sanscrit. I earnestly trust that no one will attempt to write a book in any current West Indian dialect of English. It would, I feel sure, be absolutely unreadable; besides, the accent and tone-values are impossible of reproduction in print. Without attempting to do the impossible, I would like to quote just one sentence I caught from our carriage one day. "How yer doan go down dese road and fetch dem watter like yew ben beg for long pass." In fairness to the negro, it must be said that when speaking to "fresh people," as they term the English visitors, they modify their terrible jargon greatly, so that it does become possible to understand them if one listens very carefully, while the better class of coloured folks speak quite a pure English, albeit with a very quaint intonation.



We are bidden to expect great things in the way of beauty and prosperity at Trinidad by the natives and old residents of that great island. They speak patronizingly of Barbados, rather scornfully of other islands, but of Trinidad they can only talk in superlatives. It is our first introduction to a curious and not entirely unpleasant feature of general conversation with the white residents of the British West Indies, viz. that whatever island they live in is by their account the healthiest, the coolest, the most interesting, and (but this does not apply generally) the most prosperous. It must not, however, be supposed that in thus eulogizing their own island they necessarily disparage others. Rather do they speak pityingly, as if they were somewhat sorry for those not so fortunate as themselves, whose lives have been cast in less pleasant places. I lend an attentive ear to all these remarks, making mental reservations the while with an almost desperate sense of the futility of attempting to reconcile so many conflicting statements.

And so through the pleasant tropical night the *Tagus* glides swiftly, silently, with hardly any appreciable sense of motion. Indeed, in only one place in this fine ship is there any noticeable vibration, and that is right over the propeller, where it *must* be felt. The spacious promenade deck is filled with a well-contented if motley crowd, each constituent of which is ready at a moment's notice to enter into confidential

conversation with any one upon almost any topic, and in, usually, any one of half a dozen differing languages or dialects. Gradually the deck becomes deserted by all except a few hardy souls who prefer to lounge in a deck-chair all night to seeking the seclusion of their cabins. But when, as is my wont, I come on deck at 5.30 a.m., in all the freedom of pyjamas, I find only the captain, chief officer, and purser strolling about, pleasant and genial as if they had enjoyed a long, uninterrupted night's sleep, instead of having snatched at best two or three hours of greatly needed rest.

Presently the swiftly grown dawn reveals the dim mountainous masses on either hand in all their splendour of tropical vegetation. What has seemed like smooth peaks and ravines are shown to be dense forests, apparently impassable by foot of man, huge trees with their branches so thickly interlaced that they must form a complete barrier against any stray sunbeam ever reaching the steaming ground beneath. Onward we glide in perfect silence through the narrow gap between the mountains, called by the old Spaniards the Boca del Mono, or Ape's Mouth, which from the direction in which we have come is the shortest way into the Gulf of Paria, formed by a great westerly indentation of Venezuela on the one hand, and the big island of Trinidad on the other. The mighty flood of the Orinoco, pouring through the many channels of its delta an incalculable flood of fresh water, has changed

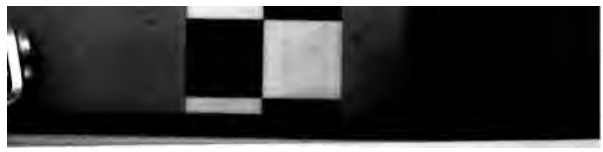


the bright blue of the sea into an extraordinary tint of dark olive, which churned up by the propeller under the slanting rays of the rising sun, gives a most peculiar effect of colour, and adds much to the beauty of the whole sea and landscape. Presently, in small clearings or on tiny beaches, there appear isolated groups of houses, adding an intense picturesqueness to the charm of the whole scene, especially where they are perched nest-like upon lonely groups of islands. I cannot help wondering why, with all this gigantic area of unoccupied land around them, there should be found in so many parts of the world people who voluntarily choose for their habitation some forlorn and almost inaccessible spot on island or crag. I suppose for the same reason that in small country towns at home one finds people who might have as much room as they chose for their houses huddled together in positive slums with pathways between the cottages so narrow that one may almost stand upon one's threshold and shake hands with a neighbour across the road leaning out of the window. Perhaps it is the gregarious instinct in its lowest form, allied to the equally natural desire of living in a place hard to be got at by possible enemies.

Now the masts of the shipping at Port of Spain appear, and the fine town itself, under the canopy of a dense cloud of morning mist, becomes visible. The limits of approach to the anchorage are very clearly

marked (in the daytime) by a sudden change in the colour of the water from olive green to mud. But there are no chances taken in these ships. Nothing is left to guess-work. In true naval style, a quartermaster on either side heaves the lead, and more or less musically, according to his ability, chants the depth of water. Bang, *bang*, goes the double explosion of our signal rocket, there is a crash of the falling anchor, a few backward turns of the screw to keep the good ship astern of her cable, and we have arrived.

Then, under the earnest scrutiny of many eyes, comes the medical officer, an indispensable official everywhere out here. He receives with becoming dignity the clean bill of health from the hands of our doctor, and grants us *pratique* or freedom to communicate with the shore—and pandemonium begins. For here, as in most of our West India possessions, the advent of a mail ship is a matter of highest import to the boatmen. It means to them very possibly the income whereon they can live for a week, one day of heavy toil and much extra-legal fare wrung out of the overborne traveller. But I would put in a plea for the boatmen of the British West Indies as I do for my good friends the London cabmen. If all passengers paid their legal fare they could not possibly live, and the little extra given, drawing the line at extortion, is but a most unimportant item in the sum total of pleasure expenditure. And you have the



satisfaction of knowing that you have given a certain amount of delight to a really very hard-working man or set of men. A most immoral doctrine, I hear some wealthy curmudgeon say—a man most likely who will spend as much on some perfectly useless entertainment to people who are most acutely bored by it, as the sum total of all his cab fares during his whole life. I understand his attitude, but I hate it all the same.

Comes the smiling agent of the Company, well-groomed, suave, as if he had not been in his office before daybreak awaiting the advent of the mail ship. Now is he in great request, expected to be, and, indeed, generally being, an encyclopædia of information connected with the islands. To the most inane, irritating questions, put by people without thought, he must return polite, intelligent answers, showing no trace of annoyance, although his brain be humming with a hundred things. Let me give an instance. A lady approached the agent; in a highly excited tone she declared that her luggage had been lost, volubly declared that she would hold the Company responsible, etc. Politely the agent replied, requesting a description of the missing property. Another flood of information, ending in many tears. A heap of luggage lay close to them to which the agent turned, and, hauling out a trunk said quietly: "This seems to answer your description, madam." She stared incredulously for a

moment, then admitted reluctantly that it was. And all the rest of her belongings lay closely adjacent thereto in their proper place for going ashore. Of course she did not show any sorrow for having yielded to such unwarrantable fears and said so many strong things, but the agent smilingly congratulated her upon finding her baggage so easily, and turned meekly to another complainant.

These and many similar incidents give to the observant traveller or tourist abundant opportunities for amusement and instruction, apart altogether from the exceeding interest of the trip. The study of human nature under varying conditions, especially when the humanity we are accustomed to comes into contact with a totally different class of men and women is, I venture to think, of highest value and profit. Which must be my apology for thus devoting a couple of paragraphs to the foregoing.

Now, on my first visit to Trinidad the vessel only remained in port from 6 a.m. until 1 p.m., and as I was going to return and spend two or three days on the island I did not feel inclined to go ashore for so brief a stay. It was a mistake such as I can so easily make, feeling as I do that to rush ashore and tear about there in the great heat would be the reverse of pleasant. My subsequent experience has convinced me that five or six hours ashore in such a place as Trinidad is ample time wherein to gain a really good

idea of the beauty, extent, and prosperity of the port. And this experience may be gained without any undue rushing about, rather in the easiest possible manner, so many are the facilities for getting about placed at the disposal of the traveller. Also, while I have no desire to advertise anybody, I should be doing less than justice were I not to say that Port of Spain boasts the most comfortable hotel in the West Indies; that is, as far as my experience goes and by common report. Which, as travellers well know, is a matter of no small importance.

So I remained on board in great content and indolence, watching the life of the harbour, and enjoying conversation with all sorts and conditions of people, of all shades between ebony and white. Not, however, without an uneasy feeling that I should find some difficulty in dovetailing the several sets of impressions received on my various visits to the same places. That, however, was purely personal. Meanwhile the work of the ship went on with immense swiftness and smoothness, independent entirely of the constant coming and going of visitors of all kinds. And the morning slipped away so easily and pleasantly that I was quite astonished when the warning bell for all outsiders to leave the ship began its usual vociferous clanging. The more so because I discovered that there were a goodly number of amiable fish which responded readily to my invitation to come



aboard on a permanent visit, fishing being a pursuit of which I have always been very fond. Punctually at the time appointed, however, the warning gong sounded in the engine-room, and I hurriedly coiled my lines lest the giant screw should reel them in for me—and retain them.

How readily one falls into the comfortable ways of the ship! and what a sense of relief is experienced, a feeling as of home-coming, upon returning to her even after the most pleasant time ashore! Even I, whose experience has been fairly comprehensive, never got quite quit of the feeling, and always enjoy gathering round the cosy meal-table, seeing the familiar faces (one does grow familiar so soon on board ship) around, and exchanging our newly-acquired stock of impressions. Moreover, we can now settle down for the long stretch across the Caribbean Sea to Kingston, Jamaica, which will occupy the best part of three days we are told. But our delight at being "once more on board the lugger" is tempered by the loss, quite a personal loss we feel it, of some fellow-voyagers, who, although only known to us for so short a time, appear to us as if they were life-long friends. Their going appears to have left quite a gap in our lives, and we recall regretfully how for the first two or three days out we eyed each other distrustfully, as the manner of Britons is when they are compelled to foregather for the first time. Apart from this,

which is unavoidable, we entirely enjoy the run to Jamaica.

There is a great charm about this portion of the ocean, shut in as it were from the Atlantic, to which it belongs, by the vast mountain chain of the Antilles, and shut off from the Gulf of Mexico by the close approach of the Western extremity of Hayti to the mainland of Central America. It has been the scene of some of the wildest, most bloodthirsty exploits of all the rabble of the sea pirates, buccaneers, and privateers that lawless times have produced, and were it not for the kindly, cleansing nature of the beauteous sea, every wave should be permanently stained with blood. Naturally it is beautiful, but by no means placid, for conflicting currents and abnormally strong winds, for this tropical region, make its crossing at certain months of the year an exceedingly rough one. And ever in the autumn hovers over it the dread possibility of that tremendous scourge, the hurricane. Happily the time limit of these awful meteors is known with great accuracy, and consequently during what are called the hurricane months, no one visits these waters on pleasure bent, as we are. Moreover, apart from the possibility of meeting such a convulsion of nature on its destroying path, the weather in the hurricane season is of a peculiarly unpleasant kind. Mighty masses of leaden cloud shut out the sun, but do not keep his heat from filling what appears to be

the very limited space beneath that grim canopy. The fresh breezes of the Trades which temper the direct rays of the sun at other times, making a delicious coolness in the shade and rendering the nights almost chilly (but in how different a sense from the chill of Northern climes?) are now languid, fitful, and indeed often absent. Man and beast suffer alike, and all those who can avoid this region make haste to do so. It is an unpleasant time, to use as mild a word as possible.

But now the sky is of a limpid blue, flecked with fleecy cloudlets by day, and a deep, deep violet, bediamonded with stars of a brilliance unknown to the temperate zones, by night. The sea is dazzling to look upon, and but for the fact that we are—the whole mighty mass of ship and contents—being hurled through these bright waters at sixteen miles an hour, would be seen to be most plentifully peopled with fish of many kinds, besides the shining shoals of flying fish which ever and again dart affrightedly from under our bows. We have, to be sure, the inestimable advantage of being practically independent of wind and current, making our arrival in each port a matter to be reckoned upon with almost the same accuracy in point of time as that of a first-class English railway, but we have lost the privilege accorded to voyagers in the old sailing-vessels of observing closely the habits of the wonderful sea-population, to say nothing of the

delight their marvellous beauties are to the eye. But there be very, very few who give one thought to this really great loss, so satisfied are they with the immense change for the better in ocean travel, and I certainly am not disposed to quarrel with them because of this. For the benefit to the world is so great through the coming of ocean steam, that it would be more than usually idiotic to sigh for the "good old days" because of a certain loss of beauty and time for meditation.

Enough, however, of this. Our good ship draws rapidly nearer her destination, until on Friday morning at daylight, sixty-four hours from Trinidad, I once more behold the blue hills of beautiful Jamaica. Is it any wonder that I feel strangely as I see them? My mind flies so swiftly back to thirty odd years ago when, a child full of wonder and unsatisfied longings, I sailed these blue waters, first saw these lovely shores. How keenly, vividly, do all the circumstances recur which I have recorded in "The Log of a Sea-Waif." But most clearly I remember, as emphasizing the whirligig of fortune, the changes of a few brief years; my lying bound upon the schooner's deck, bidden to pray as I was about to be drowned as a sacrifice to the ignorant superstitions of that brutal gang of barbarous men. And now; to revisit the scene of so much suffering under the very pleasantest of conditions, able to enjoy to the full all the varied beauties of sea

and shore, seemed almost too great a change to be really true. The morning was delightful with that splendid freshness only felt on tropical shores near dawn, but I regret to say there were few on deck to share the joy of it with me. It really is a very great mistake which is continually made by voyagers in search of pleasure, especially ladies, that they do not seem able to tear themselves from their beds until the first bloom is off the day. And the loss is much greater when, as at this time, the ship is coasting along such a beautiful shore.

Presently the long, low-lying spit upon which famous or infamous Port Royal stands, and is known as the Palisades, is seen stretching out like an attenuated arm into the sea, its extremity pointing at the first group of coral islets and reefs we have seen this voyage. We steer almost directly for the point, and soon discern the pilot awaiting us in a canoe, as used to be the case thirty years ago. No change here. And the men who handle that canoe are just as clumsy as usual. One would think that long practice would have made them expert at coming alongside of a ship, especially one moving as slowly as the *Tagus* is now. But no; before they are able to tranship their pilot to us, our jolly captain's patience is sorely tried, and he calls sharply from the bridge: "Are you going to keep the ship here all day?" That, however, is but the beginning of his



annoyance, for upon reaching the end of the spit upon which Port Royal stands, the ship is stopped, and lies for nearly half-an-hour awaiting the coming of the health officer, customs officials, etc., who all seem to be quite unaware of the fact that by their dilatoriness they are keeping His Majesty's mails and His Majesty's lieges from England waiting an unconscionable time.

Now, while I sympathize fully with the captain's most justifiable impatience, I feel a secret delight in being able to have a thorough survey of this most interesting spot, where over thirty years ago I used to come out at night from Kingston, and fish with friendly negroes. I recall, too, the stories I was then told of the buried town of Port Royal, and the belfry of the submerged cathedral which, so the legend says, reverberates during hurricanes with the clangour of its bells swinging far beneath the sea. Of all the bloodstained history of Port Royal, its shelter to the buccaneers and pirates, its horrible licence and curious law, at such a time as this and under such circumstances one can do little more than catch occasional mental glimpses. The gory old days, with their splendid halo of romance are clean gone, and in their place remain to my Philistine and bourgeois satisfaction the trim, clean, and punctual steamship, with her crowd of eager, curious tourists, and her comforts so nearly approximating to those of a well-appointed



hotel ashore. I cannot help feeling this—perhaps it is the effect of middle age, but having experienced something of the miseries of the romantic life of the sea, the glamour of that time long past is discounted, and beneath it I see poor human flesh groaning and travailing under its burden. No wonder men dared and did so much when life was a possession hardly worth the keeping, when death meant, at any rate, surcease from known woes, release from unnameable tortures, and the future, dark, dreadful, and unknown, promised at least a change from the intolerable agonies of the present.

Hurrah! we are free to depart for Kingston. The engine-room bell clangs viciously, as if the officer of the watch had been able to impress it with his strong sentiments. Obediently the good ship swings round the point, and speeds towards the city of Kingston, place of so many vicissitudes of fortune. But as the vessel nears the wharves I listen to a tale which aroused my utmost indignation. I hear that the octopus of the United Fruit Company, of which more later, is actually tightening its grip on Jamaica, nay, more, is with that amazing ingenuity of the American billionaire, finding ways to divert Imperial Funds granted for the resuscitation of this grand island to its own purposes and aggrandisement. I dare not go into details yet, for my evidence is incomplete, but I have heard enough to make me feel hot and angry



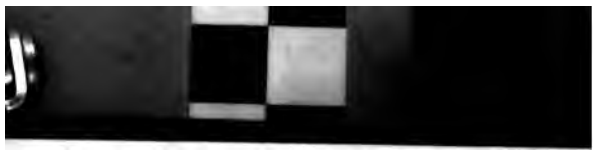
with Englishmen who can actually allow themselves to be made the tools of the fiercest enemies of their country. American business men seem to direct all their energies to the undermining of British trade everywhere, but nowhere are their machinations, utterly unscrupulous as they always are, to be seen in greater force than they are in this part of the world, which Americans seem to consider should be naturally a part of the United States. I have no quarrel with Americans if only they will come out boldly and say: "We hate you, and wish to destroy your trade everywhere," but I must confess that the cant about "blood being thicker than water," and "hands across the sea," makes me positively sick. Not a dime in money or one drop of blood would be expended by America to save Britain from destruction unless it injured United States trade.



IV

KINGSTON, JAMAICA

THE last chapter closed with a feeble attempt to express my sentiments respecting the American methods of competition with England, if that can be called competition where one competitor has both hands tied behind his back, and the other has neither sense of fairplay or honour to guide him. It is a subject I would gladly leave alone, but after two long tours in the United States, where I have been made to feel that it were better to be any alien than an Englishman, and been subjected to every form of insult that a sensitive man could feel, not personal but national, I do wish in the strongest terms to warn my countrymen not to place any reliance upon professions of American friendship. Therefore I am undoubtedly prejudiced in my views of Americans and their methods of business, but I do believe that I am justifiably so, and that, too, by their own admissions, both public and private. Witness the evidence offered in Miss Ida Tarbell's wonderful book

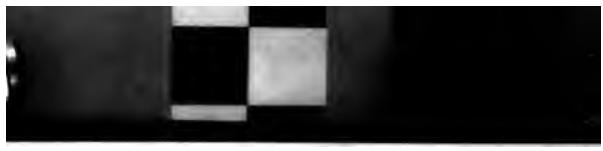


on the Standard Oil Company, lately running through the pages of *McClure's Magazine.*

But now I wish, and I feel certain my readers would wish me, to return to the subject of my book, that is, the tour and its concomitants. As we steam slowly along the sea-front of the city, with its bright-looking houses embowered in tropical vegetation, it looks a very pleasant and picturesque place, but awakens no memories in my mind. It has changed so much in thirty years. I note with great satisfaction how well, solidly, and neatly the wharves are built and kept, and mentally contrast them with the ramshackle piles of lumber which do duty for wharves in the mighty city of New York. It is one of the mysterious anomalies which Americans seem to delight in, this of having side by side public works and buildings of equal importance, one set of which will seem built for eternity, and the other apparently ready to fall to pieces at a touch. It lends an air of instability and want of permanence to some of America's greatest cities. There has not been a single port out here which I have not visited, and even those on the Spanish Main, such as Limon, Savanilla, La Guayra, Colon, where the ship lies at a wharf, where her wharfage has not been incomparably superior to that given to ships of four times the tonnage in New York. And I am sure I cannot tell why.



Our big ship comes gently, certainly, into her berth, with hardly a sound heard except the occasional clang of the engine-room bell, and the shrilling of the boatswain's pipe at intervals. Without delay she is moored, and a gangway laid so that whosoever will may walk ashore. And here I felt my first desire to complain. For ladies in summer dresses and gentlemen in light clothing, to have to run the gauntlet of a host of coal-carrying or cargo-handling negroes in an atmosphere of coal-dust, and amid all the varying, unpleasant odours of a tropical cargo warehouse, is annoying to say the least of it, especially after the extreme cleanliness of the ship. And if there be any wind blowing, the place where the cabs stand in the Company's yard, and where passengers must needs board them, is a place of horror, for clouds of coal-dust, sweltering heat, noise, and smells. Worse still, although I would not say that it is always the case, the wharf on sailing days for a hundred feet from the gangway is thronged, packed with negroes of both sexes, clean and unclean, through which crowd it is necessary to bore one's way, subjected to ribald remarks in volleys, and in absolute danger of personal violence from lewd negroes of the baser sort. It was really the first time that I saw anything to complain of during the trip, but it was and is a very serious grievance, which is why I set it down here, for I feel sure that it has only to be known to the heads of the



Company to be promptly remedied. They will, at any rate, be assured that I have not exaggerated in the least.

Here I landed at once, and with the majority of the passengers who were going on with the ship, drove out to the beautiful Constant Spring Hotel, about three miles distant from the town. Kingston itself was full of interest, but at that time of the day intensely hot and dusty, and crowded with busy traffic. In fact, its general air of bustle and activity gave us a most favourable impression of its prosperity, and the many fine shops, full of buyers, did much to deepen that impression. But the condition of the streets and sidewalks was very bad. It seemed as if the American custom of neglected thoroughfares had full hold of the municipal authorities, although I gladly admit that I saw no streets as bad as I have seen in Chicago, Boston, and New York, to place them in their order of demerit. There is also a very fine service of electric cars run on the trolly or overhead-wire principle, and the track, as well as the standards supporting the wires, was kept in English fashion, that is to say, incomparably better than I have ever seen in America. The speed at which the cars travel, however, is almost as great as it is in the United States, that is to say, about double what is allowed in England.

The ride up to Constant Spring is a charming

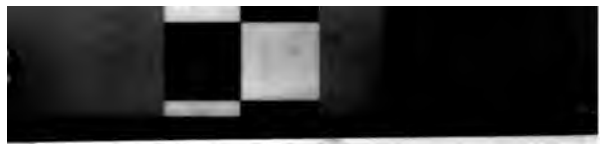


one, and the crowds of negresses in spotless white, bearing burdens on their heads, with an easy, swinging gait, are an interesting study, but they lead to a deepening of the impression that in these islands the women do most of the heavy labour. It is natural I suppose, and without it the labour problem out here would become very acute, but it grates unpleasantly upon our senses as a kind of topsy-turvy idea, a remnant of savagery. And so, along a wide, pleasant road, bounded by houses large and small, standing in their own richly wooded grounds, and in many cases bounded by living fences of pillared cacti, we reach the lovely grounds of Constant Spring, and catch our first view of the fine tropical-looking building nestling at the foot of the hills, which stretch away upward, fold upon fold, until their richly clothed summits are lost in the rolling mists. Here, through a long trellised corridor, resplendent with the glorious flowers of the Bougainvillia, we emerge upon the front stoop of the hotel, commanding a beautiful view over the adjacent country. What a contrast everything presents to the dear sober tints of home. Under the white-hot sunshine the glaring colours glow again, they smite the eye with a sense of vividness never gained at home, except under the artificial conditions and intense light of a well-managed pantomime. Indeed I have repeatedly remarked to friends upon coming out into the morning glow at Constant



Spring, that it reminded me of a scene in a Drury-lane pantomime, so brilliant and blazing were the colours. Oh, it is an intense land, and one that would appeal, must appeal, to the artist and philosopher equally, for it opens up new problems and pictures at every turn with unstinting hand. I do not pretend to understand the situation out here at all, but I confess that it seems to me that something must be radically wrong with the management of an island like this when it is in financial difficulties. Everything we need in England, and are willing to pay for at remunerative rates that the tropics can produce, will grow here in abundance—coffee, cotton, cocoa, spice, dyewoods: to mention only a few of the highly valued products, while fruit, as we know well, is demanded from Jamaica in ever increasing volume. The labour problem is not present here as in Barbados. Under any intelligent system of cultivation and management the island would support many times its present population, yet I fear very much that it is gradually slipping back into a semi-barbarous condition. The system of peasant proprietorship, so valuable in most temperate countries, is fatal here to any development of great industries. If the black man can produce from his plot of land, with machine-like regularity year by year, sufficient for his family's simple needs, why should he seek to accumulate? He lives an ideal life, one that would appeal with great

force, I suppose, to such a man as John Ruskin. Primitive, care-free, and picturesque, but bearing no relation to the pressing, breathless desires of modern Europe. And even while I write I feel that, after all, the black man who, with the minimum of labour and thought, produces an ample sufficiency for all his simple needs may be far happier, nay most probably is happier, than a multi-millionaire, who in his gorgeous Park-lane mansion sighs for a tin plateful of pork and beans, and the healthy appetite he used to bring to it. His dress clothes irk him, the velvet-footed flunkeys annoy him, he wants to be about in open-breasted shirt and pants, feeling the primitive joy of mastery over circumstances only tasted by those who *do*. What, then, is a poor scribe to say, with all the problems of twentieth-century existence confronting each other in his mind? The eternal *cui bono* will arise and rend him between duty and inclination. I confess that I have looked upon the "nigger" proprietor taking his siesta outside his cottage door, and mentally compared him with the Lancashire mill-hand, to the immense disadvantage of the latter. Within the space of a few fleeting years both will be dust, and who shall decide which of the twain has been of most service to his kind? I certainly shall not hesitate to decide which has been the happier, if personal happiness were the *summum bonum*. But between the senseless waste, the useless extravagance



of modern society and primitive savagery there are infinite degrees, and it is exceedingly difficult to say where, in that vast interval, lies the golden mean. However, I do not propose to tackle a problem which has daunted wise heads, yes the wisest, but state it as it appears to me. Of one thing I feel assured, which is that the spread of small holdings in the British West Indies under our mild, paternal rule, means inevitably a return to primitive conditions, and a gradual but certain falling off of trade. And in this opinion I am borne out by men on the spot who have the very best means of judging.

Up here the traveller will feel, if he has not done so before, that his trip is a great success. There are exceptions, of course, poor wretches who have brought their cares with them, and still more unfortunate beings who go through life grumbling and scowling, apparently grieved more when there is nought to grumble at than when there is really ground for complaint. Such folks are a curse to themselves and everybody else, and it is hard to see why they ever come on a pleasure trip at all. But they do, worse luck, and often by their persistent fault-finding infect good-natured but weak-minded people to such an extent that the latter will follow, albeit at some distance, on their gloomy path. Of the harm they do I need not speak; I will only say what is well known, that often purely imaginary grievances have been



formulated and exaggerated until some quite innocent man or set of men have been ruined, their life careers closed as far as that particular occupation in which they then were was concerned. Please understand that this outburst is entirely due to my remembering my first morning at Constant Spring. Rising as usual at 5.30, I went downstairs, got a cup of coffee, and took it out on the verandah. The sun rose in indescribable glory over a scene that made me think it comparable to Paradise. The light was so perfect, the air so sweet, the colours so lovely; the varied greens of foliage and turf alone affording a study in tints to make an artist despair. It was a time to make the heart swell, and almost make the dumb to sing. But into it there came certain persons who, blind and deaf to its influences, began a conversation full of fault-finding, calumny, and bitterness. They spoilt everything, like a stripe of mud across a bridal dress, and I fled to recover my peace in the sumptuous swimming-bath, fed continually from the constant spring with cold, sparkling, fresh water, and large enough to afford a dozen people swimming and diving room at once. The extreme physical delight of a cool swim in the tropics, under shelter from the sun's burning rays, is something never to be forgotten, and —I hope I am not ungrateful to my beloved sea—it is enhanced by being in fresh water.

That morning swim set the keynote for the whole



day, but really after breakfast I was like a book-lover turned loose in a huge library, I did not know where to begin the banquet of pleasures that lay before me. So for two hours I sat in a long chair on the verandah, bathed in beauty, not caring to move or think; just to feel how good it was to be alive. And a line or two of Longfellow's surged melodiously through my basking mind—

> "Oh, gift of God, oh, perfect day,
> Whereon shall no man work, but play
> Wherein it is enough for me,
> Not to be doing, but to be."

Suddenly I started guiltily, being abruptly aroused by some of my more energetic shipmates, and bidden peremptorily to shake off such shameful sloth and come and see things. So I went, though I confess I had been well content to sit still, so sweet was the place of my sojourn. Boarding the tramcar at the hotel gate, we sped swiftly down to what is called the "halfway tree," where we changed cars and were carried to the Hope Botanical Gardens. Then I was glad I came. For although Hope Gardens has none of the conventional parterres or carpet gardening of similar places at home, it has a wild beauty entirely its own, and the sensation of walking amidst trees and shrubs bearing products only familiar before in their prepared state, was an entirely novel and delightful one to most of our party. There was a



queer feeling of being at the source of things, of having skipped the intermediate stages of preparation and carriage between the English counter and the tropical tree, which I for one most thoroughly enjoyed, although my first experience of the kind goes back to 1869, when I first saw sugar-cane and coco-nuts growing in Demerara. Here we saw cocoa, coffee, spice of all kinds, cotton of all kinds, pepper, fruit of every imaginable kind that needs a tropical climate for its full development, and flowers—oh, I cannot begin to talk about the splendour of form and colour displayed by those floral miracles. But I must say a word about the flamboyant tree. Imagine an immense tree, with spreading branches shading an area of say two thousand square feet, the dark green of its foliage almost concealed beneath a veritable mass of blazing crimson blossoms. They are so bright and pure in their intense colour that they strike upon the eye almost as does the sudden blast of a trumpet upon the ear. And all over the branches of other trees, themselves beautiful beyond the power of language to describe, climb parasitical plants, such as orchids, climbing cacti, lianas, etc., each and all of which may only be reared with the greatest care in hot-houses at home. Pretty, perky little lizards dart about, their bright beady eyes peering from among the green leaves inquisitively. Occasionally one may be seen motionless upon a leaf-stalk or a



tree-trunk, except for a slow inflating and deflating of its neck-pouch. The colour of this curious appendage, in almost startling contrast to the vivid green of the lizard's body, was a pure purple, that exquisite tint obtained from the murex by the ancient Tyrians, the Imperial purple of the Roman Emperors.

So beautiful and interesting was this place that, although the sun poured down his fervent rays almost vertically upon us, and the sweat streamed from every pore, we found it hard to take the warnings of prudence, and seek shade. Sit down we could not, for the ladies of the party had a strange horror of ants, and of these busy but aimless insects there were so many that it was impossible to glance at the ground anywhere without seeing them rushing about. Except for them, however, insect life did not appear more plentiful than at home, but that, I suppose, was owing to the fact that the ground was well cleared between the trees and shrubs. Some returned to the hotel, which, so quickly does the mind assimilate novel surroundings, seemed as if we had known it a long time, quite homelike in fact. Luncheon was ready, and for the tropics fairly good, but—I really don't wish to grumble—the negro waiter is an infernal nuisance. The one who attended upon me was as perfectly hideous as one of Max Beerbohm's attempts at caricature, but a good, amiable soul, as willing to please as those we are used to at home.

But the rest! Without exception they behaved as if it was gall and wormwood to their haughty souls to have to wait upon the white person; insolence was in every look and gesture, and the only thing which seemed to afford them any satisfaction was to stand and contemplate their beauty in the mirrors made by darkened windows and such reflectors. I believe I am one of the most patient men alive, but I admit that my blood got very hot as I saw elderly English ladies being scorned, really insulted, by these black fellows, in a way unmistakably denoting that they were revenging themselves for the indignity of having to accept such service. White men doing the same work would have done it cheerfully and well. I have done waiter's work before now, and certainly felt no shame in it, and I see no reason why the occupation should not be as honourable as any other. But I am told that what I saw was so usual that people had grown to accept it as an unavoidable evil, not to be cured but endured. What becomes, then, of the elevation of the negro? I am so sorry, but my experience is that, except in rare cases, most beautiful exceptions, I gladly admit, the elevation of the negro is a myth. And this I say deliberately, well knowing what a storm of indignation I am raising.

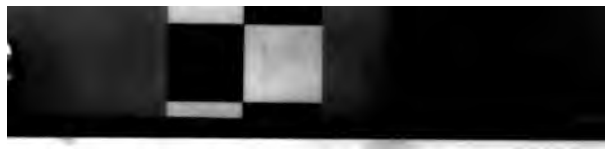
During the great heat of the afternoon, no matter what the hurry may be, visitors to the tropics will be well advised to keep in the shade. There are many

ills lying in wait for us denizens of colder climes who neglect such elementary precautions as this of keeping out of the sun when he is at his greatest strength. I am glad to say that all my shipmates were thus sensible, retiring to the cool shade of their own rooms and enjoying the siesta, so refreshing and necessary. Upon awakening, a cup of really good tea, and then another drive. There is no difficulty in finding a number of interesting drives around Kingston, and if one has the time to penetrate the interior of the lovely island he will certainly be surfeited with beauty. A glance at any of the guide-books will give a fairly good indication of the sights that may be enjoyed by the tourist, but it is nothing less than an impertinence to try and reproduce on paper the wonderful charm, atmosphere, and aroma of Jamaica.

Then came sudden night. Flaming billows of crimson flooded the sky, shot through and through with bars of other tints from deepest emerald to orange and amethyst, and then, while yet we gazed entranced upon the amazing spectacle, we became conscious that the sombre hills were fading from vision into the deepening violet behind them, a star or two peeped shyly out, the light of the day darkened, was gone. And all the host of heaven glowed forth in scintillating squadrons. No birds, as with us on summer evenings, heralded the coming nest-time with their sweet songs, but in their stead were to be heard



the incessant shrill note of the cicalas, or tree crickets, the melancholy voices of the frogs, and curious sounds made by extraordinary-looking beetles. What the scientific denomination of these latter may be I do not know, but few things have surprised me more than my first sudden acquaintance with one. I was standing in a garden at Caracas one afternoon, at about five o'clock, with a dear companion, when we were both startled by a long, piercing whistle, followed by some extraordinary combination of chords such as I should have thought producible only by a bird or a fiddle. We immediately began to scan the branches above for a bird but we could see none, except the ordinary perky little black starling of these regions, which is incapable of omitting any melody whatever. We were entirely at a loss to account for the sound, when my companion suddenly said, "Why, there it is!" pointing at the same time to a grey moth-like beetle upon the trunk of a gigantic ceiba, or cotton-tree, just in front of us. Upon its back was a device curiously like a human face, and as it gave utterance to its wonderful notes, it just bent its body upwards and then straightened out again. I stared incredulously at the creature, wondering wherever its voice came from, if it really could be the source of the almost deafening sounds we were hearing. Suddenly it became aware of me, and departed with a whirring of wings just like any ordinary beetle indulging in



flight. I stared after it stupidly as if I had seen a ghost.

The smell of the night was heavy, luscious, entrancing; full of strange suggestions and reminiscence, but I remember vividly comparing it to the scent of the sweet June nights at home to its disadvantage, only because of its richness though. And then the fireflies, like myriads of fairies bearing tiny electric lights over the dark sward and among the shrubs. It seems almost banal just to say, "they were very beautiful," but I feel it impossible to describe the wonderful charm they gave to the night. At one time—something must have disturbed them—they all appeared to rise a few feet from the ground simultaneously, and all the air was full of fairy fire. How I pitied the bridge-players who sat within, oblivious of all the beauty without! How crushingly superior I felt myself to be to them in my choice of pleasures, and wondered how men and women *could* be so stupid. And then I blushed hotly in the darkness as I realized how contemptible such a frame of mind was. The revulsion was salutary, no doubt, but it drove me off to bed, although I felt quite loth to leave. Still, even going to bed under such circumstances was delightful—to be able to throw the windows wide open to the delicious freshness of the night, and to lie sleepily counting the bright stars shining placidly down on my face.



Daylight: dear me, have I overslept? No, but the feeling of having done so was very strong, and I tumbled up with all speed. Blessings on the people who run hotels in these countries for their habit of early rising—making coffee attainable as early as 5.30. That was the time by the hall clock as I strolled downstairs and out again, with that sense of virtue common to all voluntary early risers. And I thought, regretfully, that this was, although only my second morning, my last for some time in this beautiful place. For the ship was due to sail at noon, and I must do some visiting in town. So immediately after breakfast we boarded the tram and were whirled into Kingston, where I spent a couple of hours going from one house to another making calls, and all the time feeling as if I were moving on the stage of a theatre. But I had an intensely interesting interview with the editor of the best newspaper in the West Indies (I quote common report). He was a native, very dark, and evidently of Portuguese extraction, small, lean, and a bundle of nerves. His assistant was much darker, but better featured, also a martyr to neurasthenia, and just then on the verge of collapse. They interviewed me cautiously, curiously, with a strange air of mingled defiance and deference which was most amusing. And all the while I was taking in the details of my surroundings, the dirt, the dust, the litter, the squalor: feeling what I suspect was close to the truth, that

colonial journalism meant a severe struggle with the proverbial wolf. Every part of the office gave me the impression of the staff having moved in in a very great hurry some years ago and commenced work while only tentatively straight. Thus they had gone on from day to day, and never found time to reduce the chaos to order. But how they produced the paper was a mystery to me. This state of things, however, I also found obtaining in the private houses of fairly wealthy natives of foreign extraction; as if they had given up in despair trying to make their servants keep things tidy, and for the same reason had never bought any decent furniture. If any of them see this I do hope they won't think it set down in malice; I merely record my recollection of it, and believe I trace it to the right source when I say that it is the doing of the negro servant, to whom order is disagreeable folly.

The company which owns the Constant Spring Hotel have also one in Kingston, the Myrtle Bank, which is most pleasantly situated right on the verge of the bay, indeed, there is a small covered-in jetty at the end of the grounds upon which guests sit and read, out over the surf. It is also exceedingly comfortable, having, in contrast to the beautiful environs of Constant Spring, the wide sweep of the harbour and the busy water traffic to interest and amuse. Here I met and took leave of several of my newly found friends, somewhat pathetically impressed by their earnest



desire that I should represent the condition of things Jamaican to the authorities at home, and quite unwilling to believe that I was not meditating any such thing as interference in matters political or financial, even had I the slightest right to do so. But I did try, as I always do, to impress upon them the necessity of guarding against the insidious approaches of England's two most bitter and unscrupulous foes, in a business sense, the Americans and Germans. For I found that the United Fruit Company had already succeeded, with the usual conscienceless ability of the American billionaire, in reaping a great deal of the benefit paid for in hard cash by the taxpayer at home, to help the West Indies out of their difficulties. Also, I learned that the Germans were doing, for the purpose of obtaining freight for their vast fleet, what the Royal Mail Company were forbidden to do, that is, lending money to the planters on the security of their crops, and the promise to ship all their produce in German vessels. I cannot trust myself to comment upon this fresh instance of the way in which Britain treats her enemies, to their huge delight and scorn at her folly.

I pass over the disagreeable process of embarking, as I have gone into it at some length before, and come to a much pleasanter theme. Punctually at the appointed time, the lines were cast off, and the screw revolved. The *Tagus* went majestically astern, turned



with as much docility as if she were going ahead, and, in less than five minutes, was steaming swiftly down the bay en route for the Spanish main, having started with as little fuss as if she were a penny steamer leaving Westminster-bridge pier. It is a never-ending source of delight to me, the way she is handled.



V

THE LAND OF ROMANCE

We are now, although we have only just left Kingston, fairly on the old buccaneer track, for we are bound to the Isthmus, where so many bloody deeds were done under all sorts of pretexts or none. For, although buccaneering really had its origin in the great island of Hayti or San Domingo (it is called by both names now), its more extended operations were carried on from Port Royal. It was hence that Sir Henry Morgan sailed for his historic attack on Panama, the world being regaled with the spectacle of a British Governor who was also one of the most bloodthirsty pirates and murderers that ever lived. It is of no avail to say that he was fighting against his country's foes—really he was a man without a country, *hostes humani generis*, and his only object in life was the gratification of his horrible lusts. Providence chooses strange weapons for working out her ends, and verily, guilty as the Spaniards were, they were terribly repaid for all their cruelties to the hapless Indians whom



they supplanted by having such fiends as Morgan let loose upon them. And as we steamed across that lonely, peaceful sea, I could not help picturing Morgan and his host of unspeakable villains sailing in their motley fleet in the same direction, each one of them panting with lust of blood and plunder—an awful contrast to our serene and peaceful errand. Also the contrast between the conditions of life on board those old buccaneering vessels and ours is so great that the mind can hardly take it in, will refuse to realise how it was possible for men to live at all under such bestial circumstances, with such nameless horrors in the way of food and drink to keep them up to their work as the buccaneers did.

Sunday at sea in these ships is always to me, at least, a delightfully peaceful time. It is a day of rest, indeed, for even those extraordinarily energetic souls who consider every moment wasted unless they are playing some of the ordinary ship games, feel it incumbent upon them to refrain from them to-day. But for the crew that day, there was only the rest obtainable in the watch below. The watch on deck, and a large gang of labourers also, were tremendously busy removing from the ship the traces of that most essential, but terribly soiling operation of coaling. In Kingston they had received on board during our absence sufficient coal to last the ship back to England, and so dry was it that, in spite of every precaution



being taken to localize the uncleanness, coal-dust had permeated into apparently impossible places. But so energetic was the attack made upon the cleaning, that by the time Sunday was well over, the ship was restored to her ordinary condition of purity. I could not, however, help feeling like a heartless sybarite as I lay luxuriously on the promenade deck in a long chair watching the proceedings. I felt as if I had no business to be thus loafing while so many of my shipmates were toiling. I do not think I shall ever get used to it.

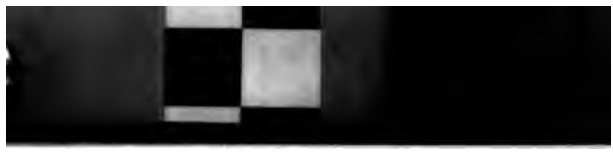
At daylight next morning the coast of Central America was revealed close at hand, and at seven o'clock we rounded the low spit upon which Colon stands, and in company with the British cruiser *Retribution*, steamed slowly in. She, of course, came to an anchor, but we went in alongside the wharf in our usual easy, nonchalant style, the whole operation, from stopping the engines, taking only about ten minutes. Here we found a motley collection of steamships. There was a Spaniard, a Frenchman, a Norwegian, a German, and two Americans—vessels of the direct New York line these latter. There was also one of the Combine (Morgan) steamers, recently belonging to the Leyland line. The remainder of our passengers from England, all on business bent, now prepared to leave us, to my great regret, for our fellowship had been of the pleasantest. Morpover, so



bad was the impression I had received of Colon and the Isthmus generally from the lurid stories I had heard and read of its extreme unhealthiness, that I felt pity for them being compelled to land here. Most of them, however, were crossing the Isthmus in order to take ship at Panama for Chili and Peru.

So uninviting did the place seem that I felt not the slightest inclination to go ashore, especially as the heat threatened to exceed any that we had yet experienced; but I was assured that yellow fever, which used to slay great numbers of people here regularly, had been practically stamped out by careful destruction of mosquito germs. All pools of stagnant water were treated with kerosene, which spreads a thin film over the surface, and is a barrier of death to the newly hatched mosquito through which he cannot pass. By this simple means of destroying the malignant little inoculators of disease, an immense and permanent benefit to the dwellers in Panama has been established, and now, by all accounts, once deadly Colon has been robbed of its most grisly terror. There was another reason why I should go ashore. I had heard, as who has not, of the tremendous fiasco of the Panama Canal, of the masses of material dumped here and allowed to lie unclaimed, unnoticed, unwanted. The whole story was so strange that it seemed quite necessary to see for one's self evidences of the shameful waste, incompetency, and peculation that abounded in Canal times

before being really able to believe it all. Still I doubt if I should have gone had it not been for the courtesy of the Company's agent, who procured me a free pass by railway to Panama, and telegraphed to the agents in Panama to meet me and do everything for me that I could wish. So I shook off my sloth and faced the glare, having several gentlemen from the ship with me for company. In passing, I may say that the railway is American, with all the faults of the American railway and none of its excellencies. The distance is forty-seven miles, the time taken, three hours, and the fare, first class, which is much inferior to third class at home, is four pounds return; so that I think I am justified in calling it the most expensive railway for its length in the world; and yet, when one considers the frightful expenditure of life in the building of it, no mere money payment would appear adequate to repay. It is said that every sleeper cost the life of a man, and I have no difficulty in believing it. My great trouble is to understand how men could live at all, let alone work in the dank, steamy undergrowth of the long malaria-haunted levels along which the railways runs for many miles. And going back further still, however did the old Spaniards march and fight in this awful climate, even wearing armour in which one would have thought they must have roasted like a lobster in its shell before a fierce fire? Englishmen too—but there, what is there of the



seemingly impossible in the most terrible climates in the world which Englishmen have not done? But even Kingsley, magician as he is, never succeeds in wondrous "Westward Ho!" in making one realize the furnace-like heat of these equatorial forests—in fact, I doubt if any one could. Only actual experience can convince.

However, I must not anticipate so. The train was to start at ten o'clock a.m., so dressing in my lightest flannels, I strolled up the wharf and into the train; there was hardly any place that one could say with any certainty was the station. For here, as in so many old towns in central America, everything seemed casual, ramshackle, unpermanent, as if possibly it might have to be abandoned in a hurry. The railway ran, or crawled, windingly along the main street, the houses upon which gave no hint of the amazing flow of wealth into this place a handful of years ago. Indeed, the casual visitor would jump at the conclusion that most of the *soi-disant* shops were just drinking-dens, and I was solemnly given to understand that the soil upon which Colon stood was a rich compost of corpses and sewage, since in Canal times, as in revolutionary times, men died like flies anywhere they happened to be, and were hurriedly shoved out of sight; while as for sanitation, I doubt if the word has any meaning to a Central American at all. I climbed into the train doubtfully, the big bell on the front of the engine



tolled dolefully, *more Americano*, and we started along the street. Tony Veller, Esq., said the whistle of a locomotive always seemed to express, "Here's 250 souls in mortal terror, an' here's their 250 screams in vun," but the American locomotive, starting, always seems to say, "I am going to kill a lot of people before I stop, and so I'm tolling their knells beforehand."

It was some little time before we "gathered way," as a sailor would say, for the locomotive was almost a toy (albeit a very dirty toy); but presently we were bowling along the level sand, amidst a tangled growth of banana trees, coco palms, and wooden huts, some of which made pretensions to being shops, usually kept by Chinamen, on one side, and an untidy beach sloping down to a dazzlingly blue sea on the other. And then we ran into an oven. A perfect forest of bananas in full bearing encroached upon the line and shut out all breeze, while the sun vertically showered down his fervent glare upon us. Through the open windows of the car came a steady shower of soot, for the locomotive was burning patent fuel, and its combustion was far from perfect. Very soon those of us who were new-comers had reduced our garments to the simplest elements, and were looking enviously upon certain cold-blooded individuals who, even in this stewing heat, were wearing serge-coats, vests, and trousers. How or why do they do it? I do not know.



I am aware that some people have a theory that what will keep out cold will keep out heat, but as far as I am concerned that theory is a false one.

The speed, never exceeding twenty miles an hour, suddenly slackened, and the train stopped apparently for breath, but really at a station, although at first nothing was visible but the dense boscage around. But on closer inspection a long, low shed came into view, and adjacent to it could presently be made out, amid the overgrowth of greenery, great heaps of railway material. And thenceforward, until we reached the great Culebra cutting, we were continually passing rows of locomotives, of travelling cranes—none of which had ever moved of their own independent volition—and row after row of construction waggons. The rank vegetation of the country had played the strangest pranks with these productions of an alien civilization. In one place I saw a noble young palm growing erect and sturdy out of the chimney of a locomotive, and, in many others, strange plants of every conceivable shape and manner of growth were wreathed around waggon wheels, climbling lovingly over cranes, and wandering at their own sweet will about and about intricate pieces of machinery destined never to fulfil the part for which they were produced. Occasionally we caught glimpses of the Chagres River, every bend and eddy of which said loudly, "Beware of alligators;" and sometimes we came



across a picturesque group of women and bright, bronze-like little children, naked as the day, engaged in washing on the verge of some sparkling stream. Be sure that wherever you see the negro woman in this country—outside of the towns, that is—she will not be idle, and in nine cases out of ten she will be laboriously making cotton or linen clothes dazzlingly white. Never mind how—only be certain that they, the garments, will not last long. But as that minor trouble is not confined to any one district in the world where washerwomen are to be found, it would be invidious to dwell upon it here.

Presently we emerged from the stifling, banana-growing lowlands into a fairly picturesque country, the sides of the line being dotted at decreasing intervals with piles of rusting railway material, as before noted. And then, suddenly, the mighty Culebra cutting came into view—that Titanic work where a mountain has been hewn in twain in order to allow the biggest ships in the world to pass through it on their way from the Atlantic to the Pacific, or the reverse. This great piece of civil engineering was, with the exception of the pier at the mouth of the Chagres River, and the piles of useless machinery, the first evidence we had yet seen of the uses to which those squandered sixty millions of Panama Canal funds had been put. In itself it was a stupendous piece of work, compelling admiration and respect for



the labours of those who had designed and carried it out. But our view of it was brief, for there was no station just there, and we were soon carried out of sight of it. Then we suddenly came upon the first hopeful sign we had seen in this much-harassed, badly governed country. We stopped at a large, straggling village, and immediately became aware of a new and entirely desirable human element. Mingling nonchalantly with the slouching, furtive crowd of parti-coloured people were several keen-looking, well-set-up youths, whose faces were full of intelligence, as their movements were of self-confidence. They wore an eminently business-like rig—I felt thankful to be unable to call it a uniform, remembering as I did the hideous travesty of clothing that soldiers have so long been called upon to wear—a garb seemingly specially designed to prevent the wearers from doing those violent acts and deeds which they were intended to perform. These men wore blue shirts open at the neck, and with sleeves rolled up to the elbow, khaki pants and gaiters, and serviceable, yet not heavy-looking boots. Round their waists were bandolier belts, at one side of which hung a revolver. A khaki-coloured hat, with brim turned up at one side, completed this smart costume, making the wearers look eminently fit and workmanlike. They were American soldiers sent by the great Republic to preserve the peace of the Isthmus under the new agreement, by virtue of which the



United States has contracted to finish the Panama Canal. They were the visible signs of northern law and order—the only thing needed in this distracted country to make it wealthy and steadily prosperous.

The reason for their presence was explained by the fact that the negotiations between the Republic of Panama and the Government of the United States had just been completed, and one of the clauses in the compact gave them the right to maintain order along the line of their property—if I am not wrong in describing the Canal and its adjacent land for a certain distance on either side as their property. I know it is not so called in official documents; but the difference between my name and theirs is only a difference in dialectics—we both mean the same thing. When a people like the Americans of the United States purchase a concession like that of the Panama waterway, and, owing to the incompetence of its nominal owners, are obliged to send troops there to protect the property, there can be no question of the restoration, or retrocession, rather, of the reclaimed country to its original semi-savagery. And in spite of my distrust of the Americans, and my utter detestation of their business methods, I am heartily glad to see them in Panama. They will, I feel sure, make an amazing change for the better in that hitherto unsavoury land, and, having undertaken their gigantic task, national pride will not permit them to relinquish it, whatever the cost.



Already one sees signs of the coming beneficent revolution beyond that of the presence of the American soldiers. Keen-faced, smartly dressed men, with that alert nonchalance so characteristic of the American man of business, are pervading the Isthmus; not at all on pleasure bent, but taking the measure of things in their several capacities, and each absolutely determined that whoever gets "left" in the pursuit of the almighty dollar it will not be him. Even the inhabitants of this land of "mañana" are awaking to the fact that "mañana" is to be changed to "ahora," to-morrow to now. And that in itself is a portent of no mean dimensions. But I am lingering long on the road to Panama City—almost as long as that procrastinating, soot-showering train. No bad likeness of a chimney-sweep out for a holiday, with eyes full of grit, and parched throat, I emerged at last at the mean collection of shacks doing duty for the Panama terminus of this most important railway. I was at once taken in charge by a courteous, polyglot young German, who, for a great wonder, did not show his contempt for me because I was an Engländer, and also a new chum. Perhaps the fact of my having been specially recommended to his good offices by the great Company for which his firm was agent had more than a little to do with his most kindly reception of me. He hurried me into a carriage, and we drove off at once to the Grand Central Hotel—along the very worst roads I have yet



travelled in this part of the world—so bad, indeed, that after ten minutes' drive I felt as if all my teeth were loose, and I was positively sore with bumping about. So villainous were the roads that I kept mentally comparing them with some I had suffered from in Boston and Chicago, and wondering if these were not really worse. So that when we pulled up in front of the Hotel—I beg its pardon—the Gran Hôtel Central, I had seen nothing of Panama at all.

A very short experience of this hotel is sufficient to cause each new visitor to scan the faces of the American visitors keenly in the earnest hope that some of them are potential hotel proprietors. For some American will surely confer an inestimable boon upon his fellow men and women by starting and carrying on a decent hotel in this most important place. Only think of it, here on the great highway of the Isthmus, in its principal city, where all the year round there is a steady stream of passengers on business or pleasure bent, the principal, almost the only hotel, is a sort of tenth-rate boarding-house, of which the only thing not entirely condemnatory that can be said about it is that it is big. And for housing like paupers, and feeding like pigs, one pays like a prince, eight dollars for a bottle of very medium claret, equivalent to sixteen shillings English. I do not wish to deal in superlatives, either eulogistic or condemnatory, but I would strongly advise tourists



bound to Pacific ports, who are taking this route, to put in the time they have to wait at Colon, where there is a decent hotel that compensates for the other drawbacks of the port, rather than be made miserable at Panama, and fleeced most shockingly in the bargain. However, the Americans will alter all that. Under their *régime* one will have to pay, of course, and a high price, but there will be an equivalent for the money.

After luncheon, as a carriage-drive was impossible, a small party of us sallied forth, first visiting the historic cathedral, which stood on the opposite side of the plaza to our hotel. While changing, I had noted from my cell window the ruinous condition of the building, and especially the way in which, through utter neglect, the various parasitic plants of the country were gradually covering the towers and terraces of the building with a rich mantle of vegetation, the roots of which were, of course, displacing the stones with which the edifice was built. Not that it ever had been a fine building in any sense of the word. Its design was practically the same as usual in these countries and in Malta, two dumpy towers at the corners of an almost flat front, and a long barn-like body trailing away astern of them, with a sort of dome over the chancel. Within both building and ornaments were—well, just tawdry. Over the whole place brooded an air of decay, as if, after dominating

these lands for centuries, the Church realized that at last it was losing its grip on them, and languidly acquiesced in the fact. Well, I am no friend to Rome, and the record of her misdeeds out here makes me, when reading it, grow faint and sick with horror, but still she stands for some recognition of God even here, and if she goes there is nothing to take her place. As in France, the people will judge all ministers of religion by what they know of Rome, and will refuse to acknowledge any. In the American strip, however, it may be different. I do not attempt any description of the interior of the cathedral, there is really nothing to describe, or, rather, nothing worth description, only I was struck by the fact that, during the whole time we were in and around it, we did not see one priest or custodian of any kind. There were a few devout souls, who had stepped aside from their burdens for a few minutes into its cool darkness to pray; and a nun, with a patient other-world face, knelt at the door and asked alms for the poor, but of the usual signs of activity in such churches there were none. But every door was wide open.

Emerging from the cathedral into the glaring sunlight, we strolled, rather aimlessly I must admit, about the city. But it would not develop itself for us, would not become anything else but a fortuitous collection of mean houses fringing those horrible roads. And presently we become aware, for the first



time, that here, in central America, that chivalrous creature, the Spaniard, has had all his politeness bred or crossed out of him. The ladies of the party, although escorted, were simply stared out of countenance by groups of well-dressed men, who even followed to have another stare when we hesitated for a minute at the corner of a street before deciding which way to go. At last, under this never-ending scrutiny, we all got so hot and angry that we fled down to the bay and took a boat. During the operation quite a little crowd gathered, taking apparently an intense interest in every detail of our faces—I say ours, but I must limit the pronoun to the ladies, who, unfortunately, had no veils. The only place I ever remember seeing anything like it before was at Canton, but that calm, celestial scrutiny was not nearly so galling as this. It did not seem personal, somehow, the Chinese stare being more like that of an automatic face than anything else.

Once out on the smooth waters of the bay, things began to adjust themselves. Our view of the city was in proper focus, we were not hampered by so many details, and the crumbling tree-clad fortifications, with the eternal sea beating up against them as it had always done, somehow managed to get history into perspective. It did not need a great exercise of imagination to see back into the past, when these quiet waters were dotted with Spanish treasure-ships,

to note them receiving their lading of silver, spice, pearls, and other valuable merchandise borne here on the backs of Indians from the interior, whose path was punctuated with skeletons in every attitude that a miserable death could suggest. Outside, one rejoiced to think, lay hidden retribution in the shape of a group of little English ships, their crews hungering fiercely for the encounter with the Dons in the almost certain prospect of snatching from them their ill-gotten treasure, and incidentally, perhaps, sending them, with their ships, to a swifter and more merciful death than they had given the poor Indians. It all seemed so real and close out here. And as the evening drew swiftly on, and the gorgeous colours of the sunset bathed the distant city in a glow of varied tints, there hung over the whole scene a glamour of romance that was quite fascinating. But we returned to shore, and were immediately disillusioned. Squalor took the place of glamour, and evil smells replaced the sweet, fresh sea-breezes so strong and pure, with which our lungs had been filled while in the bay. This latter experience made us think complacently of the coming of the Americans, whose first business, we were told, was to sanitate, to cleanse the city from its foulness, and introduce some decency of living. Rather reluctantly we returned to the hotel, quite afraid to meet the menu after our experience at luncheon. But it was necessary to eat, and we ate,



very dubiously and sparingly, and as soon as the depressing function was over, we retreated from the building to the plaza opposite, under the palms and the electric light. For it was really impossible for strangers, with ladies accompanying them, to sit there. In the first place it was exceedingly comfortless, being only a bare stone area with little tables and chairs scattered about, not at all like the romantic Spanish patio, with its fountain and trees and flowering shrubs. And no sooner were we seated than well-dressed, weary-eyed men drifted in, took seats near, and began to stare the ladies of the party out of countenance. So we fled, and meeting the amiable consul, Mr. Claude Mallet, listened to his wonderful stories of vicissitudes in Panama. Of wonderful specimens of British subjects claiming, not merely his protection or assistance, but his aid as arbitrator in domestic disputes or petty inter-family squabbles. In fact, the Jamaican negro, of whom he spoke in the terms one usually employs in describing a wayward child, that is, with some petulance, but a good deal of affection, kept him fully amused in the intervals of much more serious work. His society was a great boon to us under the circumstances, and I for one felt deeply grateful to him for his geniality and courtesy. Had it not been for him we should have been compelled to go to bed and lie listening to the baffled hum of mosquitoes outside the closely drawn net,



unable to read by the light of the one candle, and meditating upon the possibility of the bed having been last occupied by a fever-stricken patient, as really happened here quite a short time ago. This, however, Mr. Mallet spared us, and, when we went to bed at eleven, we sank at once to sleep, nor awakened until it was time to go to the train next morning and escape from Panama.



VI

A BRIGHTER OUTLOOK

It was with decided feelings of relief that I, for one, found myself in the train returning to Colon, and a sense of delighted expectation of being once more on board the good ship *Tagus*, surrounded by friendly faces, and comfortable in every way. Of the treatment afforded us by the Company's agents at Colon and Panama I cannot speak too highly. Everything that they could do they did, and I felt profoundly grateful to them for their courtesy, and as deeply sorry for them having to spend their lives in such places. I wish with all my heart I could speak more favourably of the Isthmus; but the truth is that it fully bears out all the unfavourable things I have heard about it for years, with one most important exception, that of the decrease of yellow fever. That I gladly admit is one exceedingly long step forward; but how far that immunity will apply to the intermediate places between the two ports, Colon and Panama, when work commences upon the Canal again, I have no means of



Carrying Water (Barbados).



knowing. But I fancy that the labour question is going to be the great rock ahead of the American contractors. During the last Canal time, the Jamaican negro was the only reliable labourer to be found. Whether Jamaica is capable of supplying anything like the quantity of labourers which will be required I have the gravest doubts; but as the Americans would say, "It is none of my funeral." In cases of this kind it always seems natural to look to the Chinese labourer as a being immune from disease, fatigue, or weariness. Only—the commercial instinct is far too strong in John Chinaman, I believe, to allow himself to be exploited long as a coolie in a country where the possibilities of his getting rich easier than by being a labourer are as great as they are here. And his fellow-countrymen on the Isthmus would afford him a very cogent object-lesson on how to get on in life in the Chinese sense.

We arrived at the ship at 11 a.m., and I steadfastly refused all invitations to go ashore again. The look of Colon from the train coming through sufficed to deter me from any exploration thereof, and, besides, I wanted to revel in the cleanliness and comfort of the ship after the discomfort and dirt of the shore. We did not leave until nearly seven in the evening, but that was immaterial, since we were at home. Only we felt that the mosquitoes might possibly be blown away when once we were at sea. During the afternoon we had two exhibitions of foreign seamanship full of



fuel for national pride. I have before spoken of the ease and certainty with which the *Tagus* was always brought alongside a wharf, or left it. Now we were to see a difference. A large French steamer—large as the *Tagus*—left the wharf, and for the space of exactly one hour fumbled about amidst shoutings and whistlings galore, before she finally emerged into the open bay. And even then she seemed giddy, as if her recent exercises had demoralized her, and she must needs wait to recover before proceeding. Then a Norwegian cargo-boat left, and she was, if anything, worse. But she was, of course, shockingly short-handed, and not nearly so much to be blamed as the French mail steamer. When our turn came, we, lying stern outwards, just slipped our lines and went steadily astern, turning withal and pointing our head in the right direction. As soon as she was far enough out, the engines and helm were reversed, and away we went seaward, the whole time, from the "stand by" bell till we were proceeding full speed down the bay being ten minutes.

What a lovely night it was outside!—all the more noticeable, of course, because of its contrast to the miseries within. How intensely and sincerely I pitied all those condemned to stay there!—all, that is, of European birth—while at the same time feeling glad that I had seen the place. The sea was like oil, the heavens above cloudless and glittering with all the

starry brilliance of the tropics. The big ship glided ghost-like along the shadowy outlines of the land, the throb of the propeller hardly to be discerned. All was so peaceful and serene until it was suddenly discovered that each electric globe on the promenade deck was a centre of irresistible attraction for butterflies and moths of gorgeous colours and queer shapes, and everybody became at once an ardent entomologist. During the next hour or two some dozens of choice specimens were secured by the simple method of placing a tumbler over them, and then passing a card over the mouth of the tumbler. And the Doctor was kept busy with his ammonia bottle asphyxiating the unfortunate visitors. I have been trying to think several times which was the most enjoyable time on board this good ship; and now I have decided upon the night between Colon and Port Limon. Taking it all round, it was perfect. First, its contrast to the life of the Isthmus; next, in its sweet serenity and variety of interests; and then in the pleasant sensation of falling asleep almost immediately upon getting into one's bunk in perfect satisfaction with self and surroundings.

We arrived at Port Limon, Costa Rica, at daylight, and prepared to spend a very quiet day fishing alongside the long, fine pier, splendidly and substantially built by an English company, and a credit to the Republic owning it and keeping it in repair. Here

is good accommodation for almost the largest ships afloat, and, although the indentation in the land at the bottom of which Limon lies can hardly be called a harbour, it is fairly safe except in the northern season. Even then there is always sufficient warning to permit steamers to get up steam (if, which is unlikely, they ever draw their fires at that time of the year), and proceed to sea, where they can bid defiance to the short-lived, but severe, tempest. There was little or no inducement to go ashore, for here, as in Colon, the port was low-lying and steamy. Moreover, it was just a place of transit for the cargo from the interior, and, as such, boasted no places of antiquity or interest. But, to our surprise and delight, the Captain, ever on the look-out for some way to give his passengers pleasure, suddenly suggested a visit to San José, the Capital of the Republic, giving us at the same time a glowing account of the journey thither —of five and a half hours' duration—from the low-lying banana grounds of the coast, to the altitude of five thousand feet. And, although it seems scarcely credible, this journey of eighty-seven miles, occupying double the time, could be made at just one-half of the cost as that pilgrimage from Colon to Panama of forty-seven miles. We at once decided to go; and then, as the coping-stone to our joy, we learned that Captain Rudge, with his chief engineer and purser, was to accompany us.



Dear me, it *is* sometimes possible to shake off the burden of years and feel all the delightful exuberance of the schoolboy home for the holidays. And on this never-to-be-forgotten occasion, I gladly admit that all of us, albeit we showed abundant signs of the frost of age having touched us, were, as the Americans would say, "full of beans"; indeed it was the youngsters who were subdued. We passed the Customs inspection successfully, wondering much what on earth we might have smuggled into this country with any pleasure or profit to ourselves, and were presently snugly housed in the train in the *primero clase.* As far as accommodation and locomotive went we were no better served than between Colon and Panama; but we knew that presently we should soar and keep on soaring until the very knowledge of the sweltering lowlands was forgotten. So we possessed our souls in patience through the millions of acres of bananas growing as far as the eye could reach on both sides of the line for the delectation of down-Easters, for was not all this fruit growing at the bidding of the all-embracing United Fruit Company? In no other place that I have visited have I ever seen such an enormous crop of bananas, and at every little begrudged clearing there were immense heaps of the fruit piled awaiting shipment, or a string of cars already loaded and ready to be coupled to the downward bound train. Then presently we felt, by the



panting of the engine (I should have said that it was one of those toy engines of the Colon type) that we were ascending, and on a pretty steep gradient too. Almost immediately the character of the country began to change, the air began to freshen, and scenes of beauty to peep in between the dense foliage on either side of the line. Here I must say that except on a funicular railway I never saw such high gradients essayed by locomotives as on this line. It is true that the load was light, but still the performances of that wee engine filled me with admiration. It did not look as if it had ever been cleaned since it left the yard for the first time, its cylinders were nearly on the ground, and its wheels were almost as small as the miniature locomotives at the Pan-American Exposition possessed; but it did its work—most ably too.

As we climbed steadily, the views we obtained above, below, around us, steadily increased in beauty. The line wound its way along the banks of a torrential river, only losing sight of it at rare intervals, and always coming back to it again at an increased altitude. In the bed of this torrent the boulders were worn bare and polished, in striking contrast to the universal garment of green with which the kindly forces of nature had clothed every place that would otherwise have been bare. Dense forests clothed the sheer mountain sides, descending sometimes two thousand feet to their bases in the bed of the stream,



and here and there the varied tints of green would be suddenly lit up by a glare of gold, the foliage of some amazingly splendid forest tree braving it among its more sombre fellows. Then, as we still climbed upward, the daring course of the line claimed painful attention. At times we seemed to be overhanging the abyss, at the bottom of which foamed and sparkled the impetuous stream, silent now as far as we were concerned, because of the distance we were above it. And now we reached the coffee country, where on slopes so steep that it seemed miraculous how the good old earth could remain without being washed away, the far-famed Costa Rica coffee was growing luxuriantly, and on plateaus of concrete carefully levelled, the fruit was drying in the sun preparatory to its being husked and bagged for export to the coffee-drinking world. Up here we revelled in the sweetness of the air, the wonderful effects of light and shade produced by lingering clouds, and realized that we were in white man's land indeed. There was also a more settled air about the country, as if here a more stable Government held sway, encouraging men to toil in the belief that the fruit of their labours would not be swept away from them in a moment by some insensate revolution putting the clock of progress back by at least half a century. For, under settled rule, these countries go ahead so fast that it seems, nay it is, a thousand pities when some utterly



unscrupulous gang of ruffians, with no idea but that of their own enrichment, plunge the whole State into misery indescribable. What may be done, given a few years of good honest rule, may be seen in Mexico, where President Diaz, an honest, strong, and wise man, has ruled his country to such advantage that it bids fair to be a model for all the other Republics in the world. I do not propose to enter at all into the study of Mexican growth during the last forty years. I only wish here to dispose of any idea that may be entertained by my readers, that I have classed *all* the southern American Republics as incurably corrupt and incapable of producing a Government of honest men. I do believe that Mexico has made more material and social progress during the last four decades than any other country in the whole world, and that, given another ruler of the stamp of her present aged President, if such a boon is not too much to hope for, she will soon be one of the leading forces making for the exteme benefits of civilization upon the earth.

Higher and higher we climbed round apparently impossible curves, and across spider-web bridges, at every turn finding new beauties reveal themselves to our delighted eyes, until at last, after a journey of six hours, which had passed so rapidly as to seem shorter than that between Colon and Panama, we suddenly came in sight of Cartago, the ancient capital of Costa



Rica (I use ancient in a modified sense). It was an exceedingly picturesque old town, evidently built with a view to the possible recurrence of earthquakes, for the houses were mostly of one floor, and stretched away in long lines, each almost exactly alike. But they were embowered in greenery of a wonderful character, and surrounded by a country that, but for its palms, very strongly reminded me of Devonshire, and made one of our number feel quite home-sick. Our party were here the centre of attraction, groups of fierce-eyed men of all shades coming and gazing as if spellbound at us, especially the ladies, until we felt quite uncomfortable. But it was the same sort of stare that one sees levelled at the ladies waiting in their carriages along the Mall on drawing-room days, not at all insolent, but full of curiosity at an unusual spectacle. Here we stayed about fifteen minutes, and then departing span along a very gentle descent into San José. By the time we arrived, we were ready to enjoy to the full whatever in the way of sights the capital of Costa Rica could offer us, for the sweet freshness of the air was exhilarating as that of a spring morning in dear old England—I mean, of course, a really fine spring morning. We were prepared to enjoy everything, and the meeting with the Company's agents, Messrs. Lyon, did nothing to damp our ardour. Their hospitality was immense, their energy in devising ways in which we could enjoy ourselves inexhaustible.



We were whirled off to the Imperial Hotel in carriages, noting on the way, with some astonishment, that the roads were good, and that there was a most complete service of electric trolly cars of the latest design. On mentioning my surprise at this to Mr. Arthur Lyon, he told me that both cars and electric light had been installed in San José for the last ten years, and I thought with a sigh that in the premier city of the British Empire we were only just beginning to make use of these splendid locomotive aids to intercommunication, owing to the truly infernal struggle between vested interests and the real welfare of the people.

Indeed, I found it hard to realize that I was in the centre of a Central American Republic as the day wore on, and I saw telephones in every house of any consequence, and electric light blazing everywhere. But the climate, the delicious life-giving air that one imbibed with every breath, was the chief delight! I could not weary of noting it, so short a distance from the steamy tropical lowlands. Presently we passed the National Opera House, a most magnificent building, built on the model of the Opera House in Paris, at a cost of about £250,000 sterling. Now, I am prejudiced against any such expenditure by any Government, however rich, maintaining that it is no part of any Government's duty to tax the whole of the people for the amusements of the few, and feeling besides that such a matter as this must, in the nature

of things, be far more ably conducted by private persons or companies than it ever can be by municipal or national committees handling the people's money. But some little time after, moved by a sudden impulse, I said to my neighbour, "I should think that this must be one of the healthiest, if not the healthiest, city in the world." He smiled and answered, "On the contrary, it is one of the unhealthiest; our death rate here is an enormous one, principally from typhoid." I started back in amazement, and he went on to explain that the city was undrained, that the water supply was absolutely poisonous, so tainted was it by sewage, and that matters were growing steadily worse. I did not know what to say. Imagine, if you can, such a topsy-turvy state of affairs as for the authorities to build a £250,000 Opera House, while an enormous percentage of the citizens are dying daily from the absence of sanitation! And imagine further, if you can, the citizens themselves calmly acquiescing in such maladministration. I could not resist making the remark, "How truly South American!"

But I am delighted to say that this is the only stricture I have to pass on the Government of Costa Rica, as far as my impressions and hurried acquiring of information go. The streets are clean and well-paved, the buildings are good, and the open spaces beautifully groomed. That the English interests in the country are being steadily ousted by the gigantic



encroachments of the United Fruit Company, is not, I think, to be brought against the Costa Rican as an indictment at all. It may very well be that our people are to blame for want of energy, or business acumen; I would not say they were too truthful and honest, though I am quite aware that the possession of those qualities would be a severe handicap in competing with any great American enterprise whatever. I could not, however, but feel sad to be told by the members of an English firm, whose fortunes have been bound up with those of Costa Rica in all her vicissitudes from the commencement of her career, that they were being slowly elbowed out by the Americans, who, in the name of the United Fruit Company, were practically "running" Costa Rica. The information, backed by statistics, made me wonder whether, when the United States control the waterway through the Isthmus of Panama, our rulers will permit such a discriminating tariff being levelled at our trade as will destroy it in that direction. For if one can judge of a nation's future actions by its past ones, the United States will certainly strain every effort to keep English trade from using Panama at all. I do not wish to pose as an alarmist; I only look facts in the face, and warn my countrymen that the attitude of American business men towards this country will never be what they fondly hope, or what is inanely shouted on music-hall platforms (in England only);

it is war to the (business) knife. And if all things be fair in war, they are, in the American code of business ethics, doubly so in business.

On the whole, therefore, I felt entirely pleased and satisfied with my visit to Costa Rica, especially as I there found England and English people held in great esteem, although they were certainly few in number. Also, the currency was fairly stable at about fifty cents to the dollar, or "colone," as for some reason best known to themselves, the Costa Ricans term their dollars. Which is in itself a great matter in a country where the violent fluctuations of the currency, varying in each Republic to an amazing extent, is a source of never-ending worry and confusion, making, as one merchant told me, business at times almost impossible. We all left San José with regret and vividly pleasant recollections, wishing Costa Rica all success and freedom from civil strife.

The journey down was as full of interest as the journey up, but slightly more exciting, for the sensation of gliding down those steep gradients and wondering what would happen in case of the brakes losing their grip, or a mass of overhanging bank coming down suddenly upon us, was hardly pleasant if one allowed such imaginings to take hold of the mind. I must say though that the little locomotive was handled with great care, and no unnecessary risks were run, the journey down being made to take the same time as



that upward when, had the authorities chosen, it could, of course, have been traversed in about half the time, but only by running into great danger. About one-third of the way down there is a station with a waiting-room attached, where our kindly hosts had ordered luncheon for us by telephone, a meal which came very opportunely; but I never in all my life saw such an expression of hopeless weariness as was worn by the elder of the women who attended us. She appeared to be the proprietress, and the younger one her sister; both were very white, with brown hair, and were handsome, the younger one really beautiful. In their faces, however, were reflected all the monotony and loneliness of that little cabin on the mountain side, the only break in the day being the passing trains, one up and one down—the upward one not stopping. Once a wintry smile drifted across the elder's face like the ghost of a dead joy, leaving behind it a look of, if possible, deeper despair than before. Her face has haunted me ever since, as a fit model for a picture of hopelessness.

We left the "Rest-house" in high spirits, refreshed in mind and body, and recommenced our downward journey, not without some lingering regrets at leaving so beautiful a scene. And yet I do not know. Under such circumstances as ours the "go" fever soon becomes acute, and one gets as restless as the Arab, sighing for a change after even a few hours' stay in



one place. For it is certain that the nomad strain, in even the most civilized of us, requires but the slightest encouragement to reassert itself, and the discomfort, annoyances, and positive pains of travel avail nothing against what the unimaginative Teuton calls so succinctly the "Wanderlust." Downward we sped into ever-rising temperatures and changing vegetation, feeling indeed that we were far too rapidly exchanging a desirable climate for an entirely undesirable one. And so we swept again into the banana country, the steamy, low-lying land where the favourite fruit yields her astounding increase, and the huge bundles of green finger-like food hang, swelling visibly, from hundreds of thousands of trees. But oh, the wistful faces of the workers as the train sped past! What, I wonder, did they think of us, the favoured ones, flaunting by in all our pride of swift locomotion and desirable change? Who can tell? But if I know anything of human physiognomy at all, these patient banana gatherers, stewing there for the pleasure of myriads of more happily placed ones, longed inexpressibly to get away and see something more varied than the never-changing vistas of broad green leaves and straight green stems, smell something sweeter than the swampy smell of the sodden ground, and feel free from the never-ending attacks of the uncountable swarms of predatory insects desirous of human blood.

I was really glad when the bright, foaming fringe



of the sea came again into view, and those wistful faces were left behind, for it seemed curiously wrong that I should be privileged to flit away into coolness and peace, and leave so many of my fellow-men behind to the same dreary round. And yet, I hope, I was entirely mistaken; I hope that the look upon their faces meant only half-awakened curiosity, uncomprehending wonder, while they in their tiny orbits were much more contented than we in our vastly larger ones. At any rate, my sentiment of pity for them in their lonely misery, as I conceived it, did them no harm, and, it may even be, did me some good. But I was glad to get out of the banana forest and once more behold the good, homely form of the comfortable *Tagus* resting by the long pier, as if she had always been there, and was a part of the properties of the scene. The light blue haze of smoke, lazily curling upward from her double funnels, told us, however, that the potential, willing giants within her were awake and ready at the word to send that immense mass gliding swiftly over those calm waters to another destination. Another thing, and one that is often overlooked, it told us that though her chiefs had been a-pleasuring, their subordinates had "carried on" as though the heads had been there, the work had proceeded just the same. I know that it ought to be so, and that we expect it to be so, but I often feel that there is not sufficient appreciation shown of the men



or women left in charge of house, or ship, or factory during the master's absence when they, as they usually do, faithfully discharge their trust. I feel that we all are apt to take these things for granted, fearing to magnify the services of those we employ, thus depriving ourselves of the delight of bestowing a little praise, and our subordinates of the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts to be faithful have been noted and appreciated. Yet we have the highest of all precedents in the "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

We were welcomed on board with effusion, as if we had been absent a month; and, indeed, it was a great pleasure to see all the smiling faces lining the side as we went up—all faces of old friends, for there is no place like a ship for getting loved quickly, if only one has the grace and desire to show one's self lovable. Half an hour afterwards the jangle of the big bell warned all who belonged to the place that they must leave; the engine-room gong sounded, the ropes holding us to the wharf were cast off, and with a muffled throb the propeller revolved left-handedly, drawing the big ship in stately fashion stern foremost. And as she drew into the bay the engines were stopped, the helm shifted over, and the order given "half speed ahead." In five minutes from the casting off of the warps we were proceeding eastward again on the way to Savanilla.



VII

A VISIT TO COLOMBIA

For some considerable time past the Captain and officers have been assuring me that whatever else I am disappointed in at Savanilla—the port to which we are now bound—I shall enjoy the fishing. They admit that there is not much to see at Savanilla for the shore-goer, and that the journey to Baranquilla—the chief town of that part of Colombia, on the great river Magdalena, is hardly worth the taking, but that fishing is a never-failing delight. And so, as soon as we are clear of the port of Limon, I refurbish my faith, sorely shaken by similar yarns previously which have been found baseless inventions, and look well to my fishing-tackle. For the ship here (in Savanilla) spends her time allotted by mail contract, and utilizes it in general overhaul of engines and ship. The stay is generally about three days, and, although there is no restriction as to shore-going, I hear that the crew are entirely glad to get away. I have no hesitation in mentioning this, as the United States of Colombia



JAMAICAN BOATMAN.





do not furnish any inducements for any but the most hardy of tourists to visit them, under present conditions.

As pleasures are heightened by contrasts, I feel deeply grateful at the recollection of those lovely nights at sea between port and port on the Spanish Main. Freed from the hateful incubus of dread engendered by the foulness of the shore—dread that every mosquito buzzing may have drawn his last meal of blood from a leper or a cholera-stricken individual (for these thoughts will suggest themselves where the dangerous little learning is held)—it is a pure delight to sit on deck during the cool nights, watching the brilliantly illuminated sea and the never-staling glories of the tropical sky. Not the least of these pleasures of coasting were the conversations held with men who had sampled almost every quaint vicissitude of fortune in these unsettled countries—men who, being well able, both financially and physically, to enjoy all the luxuries of civilization, were yet irresistibly drawn back to these barbarous Republics, where nothing is certain but uncertainty, and where a settled instability has become the recognized order of things. I heard many strange things concerning the ways of so-called Government officials—many queer stories of adventure in lands quite close to the sea, and therefore in touch with highest civilization; and even while always treating these stories with all



prudent reserve, I could not withhold my wonder that such things (after all the discount possible had been allowed) could go on to-day.

The usual glorious morning saw us going in to the pier at Savanilla—a really creditable structure, three-quarters of a mile long, and with water alongside deep enough to berth the largest ocean liners with ease. Of course, it (the pier) was not intended for a promenade, and, consequently, for a great part of its length it was open between the sleepers of the railway which occupied most of its width. But at the outer end, where the vessels lay, there was a fine wide space with several lines of rails, whence could be shipped with ease the cocoa and cattle which are the staple exports. I learned that Savanilla, since the last revolution—only just over—had been appointed the port of Colombia, and Cartagena, the ancient city of romance, side-tracked, as it were, for punishment, I suppose, on its having espoused the wrong side. Fancy having to decide between any two conflicting parties where revolutions are almost as frequent as bye-elections with us!

Fired by a recollection of what I had been told about the fishing, as well as deterred by the accounts I had heard of Baranquilla, I steadily resisted all invitations to visit the latter place—I *will* not call it a city, my ideas of what constitutes a city being quite otherwise. But, although I have no regrets at not



visiting Baranquilla, I grieve to say that the reports of the good fishing were entirely falsified as far as I was concerned. I caught exactly none. And it is a most singular fact that, during the whole of this cruise, wherever I have been told there was good fishing, I have caught none, and where I have been informed that the fishing was nought, there I have had good sport. However, the fishing being a failure, I could only wait patiently and hope for the time to come for getting away. But on Sunday morning, lured thereto by the deceptive little breeze that made the promenade deck under the long awnings feel quite cool (the temperature was only about 85° under there), I sauntered overside for a walk up town. All along that interminable pier I wandered, the sunbeams growing apparently more and more powerful as I neared the beach, until, at last, I stepped on to the scorching sand, and surveyed the town at close quarters that I had come to visit. Indeed, I felt grieved at my temerity. For of all the wretched places I have ever seen—apparently forgotten by God, and utterly neglected by man—Savanilla comes easily first. The houses—wretched wooden shacks for the most part—were dumped down promiscuously on the all-pervading sand, and from them flowed, through furrows in the sand, sluggish streams of sewage. Semblance of a road or a sidewalk there was none—only hummocks of sand, with rude planks here and there affording a



passage across the foul rivulets aforesaid. The railway meandered among the houses as if it, too, had been casually dropped anyhow, and no one felt sufficient interest in it, or had enough energy to put it straight. I really cannot imagine how the cars kept on the rails. Women of all shades lolled upon the steps of the huts, or waddled listlessly to and fro between their homes, and a raffle of people collected on a rather larger sand-heap than usual, where a kind of market was being held. One stout negress passed me closely, swinging upon one finger some strips of bleeding flesh dotted thickly with flies, and balanced on her head some fruit and vegetables which did not look unwholesome. But the general aspect of the marketable food was quite sufficient to induce severe nausea. This apart altogether from the dreadful stench which pervaded everything, and under that vertical sun seemed to rise in a blue haze from the fetid sand. Around and about among the filthy *débris* wandered pigs, dogs, and goats, the first named very frequently upon three legs, owing, as I was told, to an inveterate habit these funny animals have of going to sleep straddled over a railway line. Indeed, I had to pause in one place to watch and laugh at an elderly female swine. She had found a little pool of mud between two sleepers, and by dint of energetic wriggling had buried her whole carcase beneath it, her head, with an expression of perfect bliss upon the countenance, protruding by the side of the

rail in a splendid position for getting the snout removed by the first train that should pass. And as over her hovered a perfect cloud of venomous-looking flies, whose buzzing formed quite a harmony to her punctuated grunts of satisfaction, she doubtless was perfectly happy.

Turning away from her with a feeling of something like envy of her powers of adaptation to the circumstances, I became aware of a group of men standing at the angle of a hut, around a rickety table, in the full glare of the blazing sun. The atmosphere was steamy stink, shoals of vermin swarmed around about and upon them, and the heat was certainly 190°. Yet none of these things moved them. Their attention was entirely engrossed with the endeavour to win one another's money, and judging by the way the piles of silver shifted, and the bundles of dirty currency paper changed hands, some of the caballeros would certainly be hard put to it to find a meal the next day. I ventured to draw near enough to see the denominations of the notes that were circulating so freely, and was amazed at their amount. Notes of $100, $500, $1000 passed from hand to hand with such freedom that I was beginning to doubt the evidence of my senses, especially upon looking around at the nakedness of the land, and people. It was not until later, when I consulted the encyclopædic purser on board that I ascertained that



the paper dollar in Columbia at that particular time had dwindled to the value of exactly one cent, or one halfpenny, from four shillings and twopence. And then I understood how it was I had been asked *trente pesos*, $30, for a few shells and branches of coral that morning. I turned away horrified, but the poor man only meant half a crown, which indeed was dirt cheap, although he was putting the value of the dollar fifty per cent. higher than was really justifiable.

But I was, indeed, feeling very tired of the squalor, the misery, and the apparent hopelessness of the place. At the same time I was filled with admiration for the enterprise of the foreigners of whatsoever European nation, who would come here and endure the conditions of life as I had seen them in order to make money. I did not know half his adverse circumstances then, or my admiration would have been much greater. When, however, I had regained the clean, civilized haven of the ship, I found a letter from a fellow-passenger, who was a large landowner in Colombia, and had been connected with the country in business for over twenty years. He, with a friend, a Swiss mining engineer, had gone up to the chief town of Baranquilla en route to the capital, Bogota, and here they had met with a curious development of civilization, as it is understood in Central American Republics. My friend, being bound for the interior on a three-weeks' trip through a country that yields,



under present conditions, hardly any food retainable by a civilized stomach, had laid in a stock of preserved food in tins and bottles of about three hundred pounds' weight. On this he had paid the usual Customs duties or bribes—it really does not matter which—but on arrival at Baranquilla he was calmly informed that he must pay an octroi of three shillings per pound weight (I convert the local currency into English value for convenience' sake). He, indignant, proposed to send the goods back and re-ship them. "Oh no, having once been landed, duty must be paid, or we confiscate." So he abandoned his food for his up-country journey, with the fervent hope that it might be reeking with ptomaines, and poison every one of the harpies who would presently be feeding upon it. His friend, the Swiss, came off even worse. Upon his tools, although a special clause in the Customs regulations ensures (?) the entry of all things directly intended for the development of the country free, he was made to pay a *second* impost of £10, or a total of far more than the original tools and instruments were worth. And argument or remonstrance were alike hopeless, for the plain fact was that the needy vagabonds in charge must have money, and since it was not obtainable from their own people by any process whatever, they naturally proceeded to squeeze it out of the stranger within their gates. What did or does it matter to them that the trade,



the development of their glorious country, is thereby brought to a complete standstill? Nothing. Nine-tenths of them are absolutely ignorant, and entirely immoral. Their only virtue, if it be a virtue, is that they can fight, and apparently do not mind dying. But that they should have so splendid a country as Columbia to play with does seem an awful waste of excellent material upon entirely unworthy objects. Better, far better, that it should resort to its condition of primitive savagery, than go on as it does now.

I feel so sorry for the workers, too. I have been watching them loading us with coffee and cocoa, two valuable articles of commerce which I know need much patient toil and forethought to produce up in the mountains, and the workers who put the heavy bags on board the ship do work as if their very life depended upon their speed. To me there seems a veritable tragedy in the knowledge that all this strenuous and maintained labour must go for nought, that the best use a man can put the fruit of his toil to —after he has satisfied, in the most primitive fashion, the needs of his bodily machine—is to gamble it away, endeavouring to forget, in the fierce delight of cock-fighting or monté, the hopelessness which surrounds him. Fancy a land where honesty, industry, and perseverance are of no avail, where all the treasures that earth can afford are poured out at the feet of the owners of the soil in vain, because of

the innate barbarism of those who have wit enough to seize and hold the reins of power! Better by far the primitive savagery of the aboriginal owners of the soil than this welter of semi-civilized iniquity.

Here let me interpolate a true story, only suppressing names because of the entirely inconvenient consequences to the principal actors in it. In this wonderful country there are, among other incalculable sources of wealth, the richest emerald mines in the world. For some time, under a concession from the Government of the day, a French Company worked those mines in leisurely but honest fashion, making a very fair profit indeed. It entered into the minds of those in power that a very much larger amount might be gained by them if the royalties they were receiving were revised and raised, upon the expiration of the term. To their delight and surprise they found that an English Company was willing to pay an enormously enhanced sum for the concession, and they promptly transferred it, as, of course, was their legitimate right. But after a short period they, the Government, felt that even now they were not doing as well out of the business as they might, that the foreigner, as was his wont, was getting by far the best of the bargain. So they gave short notice to terminate the agreement, explaining that they were going to work those mines themselves, for the benefit of the country! The manager, an astute fellow, knowing



the uselessness of protest, did the best thing he could, in the interest of his employers. He engaged all the labour available, and during the remaining period during which the concession was running, managed to turn out an enormous quantity of emeralds—nearly treble the number that had been raised in any corresponding period before. Of course, this became known to the authorities, who, feeling that they were being wronged, took steps to prevent this mass of wealth from leaving the country. The manager, however, expecting some such move, succeeded in shipping a large quantity of his output before the embargo was laid on. Then, finding that confiscation was imminent, he placed the balance of the emeralds in charge of the British minister at Bogota. There, of course, they were safe from confiscation, but an action at law was immediately commenced, and was going on during my visit. I do not at all know what the legal processes in such a country may be like, but I do not think the Company's prospects of keeping possession of those emeralds are particularly bright.

But now comes the cream of the joke. Having got the mines into their own hands, the rulers proceeded to work them under the superintendence of the son of a very high official, his parentage being, as far as is known, his only qualification. For a time all went on splendidly. Glowing reports of the quantity and quality of the gems being raised reached head-



quarters from time to time, and the spirits of those waiting to divide the spoil rose proportionately. Then suddenly came the disastrous news that the whole of the recent output, some £30,000 worth of emeralds, packed on one mule, had suddenly disappeared. Had fallen from the summit of a precipice and could not be found. Later the body of the mule was discovered, of course without any trace of his alleged precious burden, and with a sigh the expectant sharers resigned themselves to the loss. Apparently it did not matter in the least that the manager presently erected for himself a palatial residence (according to Columbian ideas), or that, while the return to the country from the mines was exactly 0, he had suddenly become a very wealthy man. Meanwhile the work goes merrily on, but, from all I can gather, the prospect of any benefit to the country from the Governmental working of those emerald mines may be placed at or near zero.

Now, in a romantic novel, such proceedings make good reading, but when they are the recital of sober fact, and the doing of them means the utter cessation of all improvement, the riveting of the chains of misery and hopelessness upon an entire population of one of the richest countries in the world, I feel that a little indignation is not out of place. I am perfectly well aware that I shall be told that it is none of my business; but, after the manner of the



British hypocrite generally, I only see the mote in my neighbour's eye while ignoring the beam in my own, and then, if we do not like the way these people misgovern and maladministrate their country, we can stop away and mind our own business. Very well, but then these people want to be recognized as a party to the comity of nations, their representative is accredited to our capital, and they invite business relations with us. Surely these overtures on their part give us the right to expect that they shall have some elementary notions of truth and honesty and reverence for the law. If they wish to maintain a state of primitive savagery, I suppose they are within their rights in doing so; but it certainly seems hard that they should be able to bring really civilized nations within perilously near reach of embroilment, as happened so very recently.

With all these reflections surging through my mind, I hailed gratefully the sound of the "stand-by" bell, informing all who cared to listen that we were going to haul off from the wharf and anchor in the bay until midnight, when we were to leave for Cartagena. I readily admit that I was eager to be gone from this desolate, miserable place, still more eager to see a place of such wonderfully romantic interest as Cartagena, famous or infamous as we regard it from various points of view, but undoubtedly the centre of the romance of the Spanish Main. Having



anchored in the bay, I sat watching the beauties of sea and sky until late (fishing was, as at the wharf, a dead failure), and trying to recall all that I had read of that most marvellous Elizabethan time, when this coast was looked upon as the legitimate hunting-ground of hungry English adventurers, and when no pretext was needed, only opportunity asked for, to fleece the Dons. Truly, I thought, things have altered now, for the descendants of the Dons fleece all comers, and especially one another.

At midnight punctually we weighed anchor, but so quietly and expeditiously that the sleeping passengers were quite unaware of our leaving, and, indeed, many of them awoke in the morning, rubbing their eyes in amazement to find the ship alongside the wharf at Cartagena. Being myself constitutionally incapable of sleeping much, I waited on deck, enjoying the placid scene, until we were well away from Savanilla, and after a very pleasant five hours' rest, returned to the deck again to watch the entrance of the ship into the classic harbour. The narrow strait leading into the bay was well guarded by substantial fortifications—well guarded, that is, for its protection in bygone days, but I could not help wondering then, as I have often wondered elsewhere, why the builders of those forts should imagine that any invader would deem it necessary to come into the harbour at all and encounter the resistance that its



forts would surely make, when he might so easily outflank them and land somewhere else quite out of their range. And then I remembered that this is exactly what Francis Drake did, smiling grimly, no doubt, to himself as he effected his easy landing at a point well away from the forts, and much nearer the city. It seemed just as sensible, this fortification of the harbour mouth, as the action of a householder would be in barring up the front of his mansion and leaving all the windows and doors in the rear wide open.

Viewed from the sea, Cartagena is wonderfully picturesque; and as one steams up the splendid harbour, and the fortifications gradually reveal themselves, a feeling of great admiration for those stern old hidalgos, who made the conquered race toil so strenuously to erect those gigantic barriers of stone for the protection of the stolen land against the inroads of other thieves, would intrude itself in spite of one's detestation of the whole black business. But like many other places of a like nature to be found all round the world, Cartagena looks its best at a distance. A nearer acquaintance with it only breeds disgust and contempt for the present owners of the city, who apparently have no conception of the value of their heritage any more than they appear to have of the way to utilize it in any reasonable manner.

There was no cargo here for us, Cartagena having been displaced from its proud eminence as the port of

Columbia in favour of the filthy sand-heap we had just left, so we anchored out in the bay to await the coming of the mails for the specified time. That time, however, was amply sufficient for us to go ashore and view the city, which, of course, from its historic associations, all of us who could go were glad enough to do. So we landed in the ship's boat, and while waiting for the train which ran the mile and a half between the pier and the centre of the city, we surveyed with much interest two of the *war-vessels* which played such an important part during the late revolution. They lay moored stern on to the pier, looking as little like fighting ships as one could well imagine. One had been a yacht belonging to Mr. James Gordon Bennett, of the *New York Herald*, once a most lovely craft. But it was a most difficult task, looking at her, to carry the imagination back to what she must have looked like when she was the pleasure ship of the multi-millionaire newspaper proprietor. Like the great majority of sailors, I do hate to see a ship ill-used. There is something pathetic in her appearance, a mute protest against being thus mishandled. I remember once in Zanzibar going on board a vessel which had been presented by the British Government to the Sultan for some real or imaginary service he had rendered us. She was an exceedingly handsome craft called the *Glasgow*. Some errand took me on board of her, in company



with one of the crew who had sailed her out from England, one day after she had been in the possession of the Sultan for about six months. And when we stepped over the gangway my companion suddenly stopped as if he had been shot. For nearly a minute he stood, then as nearly in tears as ever I saw a man, he slowly shook his head and returned to the boat, unable to speak for grief at her condition. Well, she *was* dirty, no doubt, but compared with the *General Pinzon*, the ci-devant American yacht in Cartagena, she was a picture of cleanliness. Oh, but those Columbians are dirty people! That vessel did not look as if she had ever been cleansed, and all about her decks lay men of varying shades of colour, all kinds of rags, and an universal condition of dirt. Up and down among them slouched and lurched a lad of about eighteen, as near as I could judge, carrying, as if it were a ton weight, a long, loaded, magazine rifle with bayonet fixed. He wore a uniform of heavy cloth that had once been blue, the temperature being only about 98° in the shade.

Close alongside of her lay moored the once smart and yacht-like Aberdeen and London packet *Ban-Righ*, the recital of whose daring deeds on the Central American coast furnished forth so much exciting copy for all our newspapers in 1903. She had been renamed the *Presidente Marroquin*, an act quite superfluous on the part of her owners, since it was quite



evident that she would never again be fit for any service whatever. Her condition was, if anything, worse than that of the *General Pinzon*, and her sides were so thickly coated with sea-growths that she looked more like a half-tide rock than a ship. I must admit though that forward on the port side some black men were languidly making an attempt to scrape and paint her, and I heard a rumour that an effort was to be made to get her to Havana and repair her long-maltreated engines. But my informant assured me that this was only a dodge on somebody's part to get some money—as for the ship, she was so far gone in decay and rust through utter neglect, that to move her from her moorings was just equivalent to sending her to the bottom. No bad thing either, I thought, if there should be any probability of her present owners getting her in trim again for slaughter, piracy, and setting great nations at loggerheads with each other.

Then the train—of the usual type—came sauntering along, and, after disgorging an extraordinarily motley crowd, took our little crowd on board, and, amid a cloud of suffocating smoke and dust, crawled off with us towards the romantic city of Cartagena.



VIII

CARTAGENA

In the preceding chapter I am afraid that I have almost exhausted all my objurgatory expressions, leaving myself unable to express myself as I feel that the subject demands. Also I have an idea that I shall be accused of wilful exaggeration, not by any disinterested person who knows the country, but by those to whose interest it is that the truth should not be known, and by those whose limited experience will not allow them to credit a recital of the most ordinary occurrences in strange parts of the world. But I could not gloze over or modify what I have seen in this country on any account. I could remain silent, of course, but it being my duty to write, I must speak what I do know without fear or favour. Let me add, too, that I went up to Cartagena with the fullest intention of seeing everything in the most favourable light, and of steeping myself in the romance of the wonderful place. But what can a man do against his convictions? I well remember going to Athens once,



Washing Day.





and panting with eagerness as the ship steamed into the Piræus, for that I was about to behold those classic scenes of which I had read and heard so much. Then, oh so swiftly, came disillusionment! The powerful glasses I carried revealed not a trace of antiquity, even of the long walls, and the nearer we approached to the town the more complete became my disappointment. Then I landed, and saw that the historic Piræus was a most squalid collection of houses, as far removed from the grand classic port of ancient Athens as is the modern Greek from Theseus, Miltiades, or Themistocles. It poisoned the well-spring of my enjoyment at its source, and the journey up to modern Athens filled up the measure of my disgust; so much so that the wonderful ruins of the Acropolis would not take hold of me at all until I had got away from them and viewed them across the unobtrusive Bay of Phalerum.

All the way up from the port to the city was squalid and dirty and mean to the last degree, and when we emerged from the train and got into the carriages provided for us, I was obliged to turn my back upon the poor wretch of a horse, who had a great raw wound on his back, the sight of which made me feel very sick. But as almost all the horses I saw were in the same deplorable condition, I had either to forego my visit or walk, which latter exercise was quite out of the question, with the temperature away up to 95° in the shade—and there was no shade, at



least that I could get into. So I stayed in the carriage and tried to feel a little enthusiasm over the ancient city, but I am afraid it was a complete failure. For really those ruins did not, would not look venerable or ancient; they only seemed to tell of despairing neglect. No attempt had apparently been made for many years to repair or cleanse or build. The male portion of the population was nearly all asleep, only the women were at work. Naked children of all shades swarmed over the heaps of dirt and rubbish, in company with miserable dogs and pigs and fowls. And nobody seemed to care what happened; they only gazed with a listless curiosity at the strangers—mad, no doubt—who drove about looking at the foul warren in which they lived. Presently we arrived at the cathedral, a curiously conglomerate pile of buildings in fairly good repair. We saw no priests or, indeed, any one to act the part of a cicerone, until we entered a courtyard adjacent to the main entrance, and there found a benevolent-looking old negro who had a sail spread out in the porch of the cathedral, and was assiduously stitching at it. To him, calling up my almost forgotten Spanish, I addressed myself, asking whether he was the custodian of the building. With a bright smile, but without rising from his work he said that he was, he had that honour. But then I said, "Why are you sail-making and in such a place; does it not savour of sacrilege?" "Ah no, Señor," he replied,



"one must live, you know; and as there are practically no fees to be gained now from my office in the church, I must needs earn a little to provide something to eat. Also there are the wife and some small children at home who are hungry." His remarks were made with such obvious sincerity, and without a trace of the beggar about them, that I could not but believe him. So, picking up the leach of the sail, I looked at it closely, casually mentioning that I was a *marinero* who could appreciate good work when I saw it. This perfectly sincere remark sent the old man into quite a paroxysm of delight. I never saw a man more pleased, or was more pleased myself at being able to pay a compliment so thoroughly deserved. His sail-making was as nearly perfect as any I have ever seen.

Then, having thus paved the way to a mutual good-feeling, I told him that we were strangers in the land, and that we wished to view the great building under his charge. He immediately rose with great dignity, and, taking off his palm, put it away with his needles, twine, and wax, and hastily rolled the sail up out of the way. By this time there had arrived quite an escort of ragged urchins, who were each quite forward at offering advice and suggestions to the old man, but were not at all importunate or annoying to us—not nearly so much so, for instance, as I found them in Malta at the old city (Citta Vecchia). But they swarmed about the place without apparently the



slightest reverence for its sacred character, and in a babel of bad Spanish volunteered information concerning the paintings and statues, which we stood in no need of, since the inscriptions, either in Latin or classic Castellano, were clear enough. Presently we had our attention called to a really beautiful marble pulpit. The old man, striking an attitude, informed us that the beautiful piece of work was a singular proof of the beneficence of Dios Todopoderoso towards Cartagena. It was, he said, the gift of pious and faithful people at home in Spain, where it had been made, and whence it was sent out. But from the very outset of the voyage of the vessel in which it had been shipped for transport, bad weather, every kind of marine misfortune save shipwreck, doubtless due to the machinations of El Diablo, befell that ship. At last her troubles culminated, when only a short distance from port, in her foundering, but whether attended by loss of life or not I forget. But the blessings with which the offering of those faithful ones had been laden before its departure availed mightily against the wiles of the Evil One, and from amid the wreckage of the doomed ship, the marble pulpit, complete in every detail, rose to the surface of the sea and floated ashore in the most convenient spot for its transportation to the cathedral. Now, perhaps, it was our duty to tell that elderly and enthusiastic negro, in coldly logical words, that the legend he was reciting was pure



nonsense; but, somehow, none of us had the heart so to do, and merely nodded in reply to his wistful look of silent interrogation as to what we thought of it all.

Having remained awhile before the miracle in silent meditation—more in deference to our old guide's sensibilities, I fear, than for any other reason—we moved away, and were immediately followed by the ragged regiment of youngsters, each bent upon doing something for our instruction. The ancient cicerone took no notice of them, except in the friendliest way; in fact, as far as his manner among them was concerned, he might have been one of them. But there was only one more object in the building worthy of our attention—a magnificent marble monument erected to the late Archbishop of Cartagena, Eugenio Biffi, upon which was a long inscription setting forth his self-denying virtues, his goodness to the poor and afflicted, and his love for little children. A portrait bust of the worthy Archbishop stood on a ledge of the monument, and if it was a good likeness, as no doubt it was, it represented a man only just past his prime, exceedingly handsome and benevolent-looking, a face as unlike that of the usual South American cleric as could possibly be. Whether justifiably or not, we all felt that here had been indeed a good man. The various chapels were visited next; but all of them were tawdry, unkempt, meretricious; some, indeed, had decorations that



would have been out of place in a third-rate toy-shop, so common and rubbishy were they. And there did not seem to be anybody whose business it might be to see that such adornments as were there were kept clean, repaired, or cleared away for pity's sake.

At last, having *done* the interior, as we thought, very thoroughly, I intimated to the old man that we must now think about going, and began fumbling in my pocket. But with that indescribable gesture which at once seems to push back your reasons, deprecates doing so, and beckons you on to a better understanding, the good custodian informed me that he had kept his choicest sight until the last. Turning towards the chancel, he beckoned us to follow, and, immediately followed by the troop of urchins, made his way to where, under the faded carpet of the dais in front of the altar, there was a large trap-door. On lifting this —a task in which he was aided by all the biggest of the children—a flight of steps were revealed, and on the upper one some fragments of candle. These being lit, we all descended into the vaults, prepared to encounter the usual charnel-house smells emanating from decaying fragments of mortality. But we were most agreeably surprised. The place smelt mouldy, earthy, of course, but it was not foul or horrible, as are vaults where bodies have been recently buried. Upon my mentioning this to our guide, he told me that no one had been interred here for at least half a century,

and that the place was exceedingly well ventilated. On entering farther in, however, we were somewhat astonished to find heaps of human bones, without any semblance of arrangement or order. Most of them were piled in boxes such as wine cases—boxes that had held pickles, milk, or canned goods, but semblance of a coffin saw we none. Many poor pieces of human framework were trampled in the dust underfoot, which itself I suppose was all derived from the same grim source. On inquiring the reason of this strange heaping up of human bones, we were told that certain alterations and repairs were going on—or, rather, had been going on—and that these bones, the relics of nobody knew who, had been collected from their catacombs for reverent interment in one common pit, out of the way. But it was quite evident that the process of renovation and repair was one that had been, and would be long drawn out. When I asked our old friend when the work was likely to be finished he answered with that essentially Spanish shrug, which says plainer than the words, "Quien Sabe?" who knows? And then, turning sharply round, he pointed to a sort of window-seat beneath a grating letting the light in from outside. In a matter-of-fact tone he informed us that we now stood in what, during the time of the Inquisition, was the torture-chamber, and that the niche before us was where the victims of the Inquisitors' tender mercies were laid to endure such pains as



might be deemed salutary for their souls' health. I confess that I was not a little surprised at the calm, matter-of-fact way in which he gave us heretics his recital of these things, and the eagerness with which the children supplemented his narrative whenever they fancied detail was wanting. But before he had finished I "wanted out," as the Scotch say, for imagination had been at work, and I felt very sick, as well as full of fury.

It was quite refreshing to stand in the wide porch again, under the clear glow of day, and to realize that those old horrors were never likely to return unless mankind, stricken with madness, were again to allow "Holy Church" to rule the temporal and spiritual affairs of the world. Seeing the old fellow moving off, to begin again on his sail-making, I went after him, and gave him the equivalent of two shillings—at least, I offered it to him, but he, striking an attitude full of natural grace, said, "What! between two sailors? Oh no. Believe me, I've never had any one appreciate my work before as you have done, and I am full of joy; for I know it is good, and I love it for its own sake. Believe me, Señor, to sit here and work at my own good trade, and know that I am doing it as well as it can be done, makes me quite happy, and I almost begrudge the time spent in eating and sleeping." I had very little reply to make to this, of course; one doesn't say much on such occasions generally, but

I am glad to say that our party made up quite a nice little sum for him, and that I did prevail on him to take it. Poor old sailmaker, he was desperately thin and hungry-looking, his two poor garments were nearly falling off him in tatters; but he was one of nature's gentlemen, and, as far as good work goes, one of the salt of the earth. He remains, and will remain, the only pleasant recollection I have of the ancient city of Cartagena.

Now our party became clamorous for postcards and a post-office, and we drove off through the filthy streets, past groups of loafing men and toiling women and wallowing children, until those latest products of civilization were obtained. I am not going to enter now into the great postcard question, but I certainly like the idea very much indeed. It is such a pleasant and easy way of communicating with your friends at home, and reminding them of your existence as you roam. The post-office brought us face to face with the financial condition of Colombia again. For, upon inquiring the cost of sending a postcard to Europe, I was told two dollars, and it was difficult to realize that the dollar was equivalent to one cent—one halfpenny. The stamps, too, were cheap and nasty, without perforation or gum, and looking, indeed, much like the sheets of transfer that we used to buy at about one penny a dozen, and wetting them, stick them on anywhere to leave the picture. But such as they were we

bought about 100 dollars' worth (Colombian dollars), and, borrowing paste from the round-eyed post-office official, we stuck our stamps on and posted our cards and letters.

Now the question arose, what next? And the young mulatto, who had been sent to look after us, suggested that we should go and see the prison. Not a very cheerful excursion, but there is no doubt that the guide was hard put to it for suggestions, since we would not attempt to reach the convent on the mountain top, whence legends say Drake flung the monks headlong, deeming them guilty of inflicting those awful tortures upon his countrymen. So we acquiesced in the guide's suggestion, and started off for the prison. Arriving there we were startled to see that the guards at the gates were a crowd of mere children, the average age being certainly not more than fourteen! One child, keeping sentry-go, was apparently hardly able to carry the heavy magazine rifle which, with its fixed bayonet, towered high above his poor, lean shoulders. His comrades not on duty loafed about the prison entrance, as miserable a collection of half-grown youths as one would care to see anywhere, and without one trace of intellectuality about them. Their poor, dirty faces just had the look of a wistful animal, and nothing else. A few moments' colloquy between our guide and an ununiformed official resulted in our being admitted, rather grudgingly, it

seemed to me, but I may have been mistaken. I was, however, sufficiently versed in the corrupt Spanish of Colombia to understand the ribald remarks passed by the loafers outside (quite a gathering of them) anent the extraordinary folly of these Inglesos wanting to get into a place that most people would be blithe to get out of. And truly I had not been inside more than a minute before I wanted to get outside again. For while I gladly admit that the place was fairly clean, the fact that so many scores of men were huddled together behind bars like wild beasts, most of them untried and entirely ignorant of what they were charged with, or when they would be free, if ever, was a sight to sadden anybody with a heart in his breast. And it was not at all modified by the knowledge that the immediate probability was that, given the opportunity, these present prisoners would serve any of their countrymen the same. They crowded up against the bars that separated us from them just like so many wild beasts, while a few privileged ones came and offered odds and ends of carved work from bone and coco-nut shells for sale. Then we were introduced to a man of culture and education, who had been there for two years untried. He was accused of murder, and the accusation may have been true, but just think, if you can, of the misery of that man's suspense, cut off as he was from his family. He was energetic—had to be, I suppose, to preserve his sanity. He made boots,

walking-sticks, fans, ornaments of various kinds. I purchased from him some carved coco-nut shells perforated with the arms of Colombia and her motto, "Libertad y Orden." Grimmer commentary surely was never made than this upon profession and deed.

It is not, I think, too much to say that we came out of that prison, after seeing the prisoners' daily ration of dirty rice and dirtier sugar served out to them, full of the deepest sorrow, especially when we remembered that even in our own favoured land there were some (happily very few) who would, upsetting all our liberties, reduce us to such anarchy as this. Their names will occur to many, and I need not mention them. But what are we to say of a people who crowd so many of their most stalwart men-folk wantonly into the gaols, and keep them there untried, while impressing the children of from twelve to sixteen as soldiers, and letting them loose upon the population armed with the deadliest weapons?

By this time I felt heartily sick of Cartagena, weary of the dirt, the smells, and the sight of so much misery—needless, wantonly caused misery. But there remained the fortifications yet to be seen, those massive ramparts of stone, thirty to forty feet high, and almost as wide. Like everything else they are neglected and overgrown with the all-pervading vegetation of the tropics now, but they were far too well and solidly built to crumble except under the pressure

of many centuries. As we neared them (the ramparts guarding the seaward side of the city) we noticed that on the inner side of them there were arched openings such as might be utilized for stables or store-houses at home. Here, however, outside of those openings were congregated a wretched-looking crowd of women and children in the most hopeless of attitudes. Inquiries of our guide elicited the information that these unfortunates were those who had no homes of their own, and by the tender care of the authorities were allowed to live in these arches. But this privilege was liable to be withdrawn at any time in the event of a revolution, as those dungeons were then needed for the incarceration of political prisoners! And I was told, in the most matter-of-fact, nonchalant way, that at such times there were always splendid opportunities of paying off private grudges. A sort of game of "general post" being played, the unconsidered citizen of to-day might be the powerful minister of to-morrow, able to throw his enemies, upon any pretext or none, into gaol; and if he thought there was any necessity for it, have them taken out and shot. Truly an ideal state of things. I never did think much of a Republic, but contemplation of these Central American Republics has made me regard that form of government with less favour than ever.

Now, as far as sight-seeing was concerned, there only appeared to be one more thing to do, and that

was to view the fortifications from the top. So we mounted the steps, all overgrown with the rank vegetation, and presently emerged upon a splendid promenade, the top of the defending walls, composed of huge blocks of stone each about two feet square. As I looked at these well-fitted pieces of masonry, I found myself trying to calculate how many lives of slaves, of original owners of the soil, each one represented. It did not require much imagination to see the mortar oozing with human blood, to find those stones vocal with human groans. And for what? For this ruin, desolation, and decay. There was no sign of sentinels or ordnance up here, the original idea of these huge outworks being any defence to the city having long ago been discarded of course. But I was told that there used to be, until quite recently, a very large number of splendid old brass cannon mounted up here, pieces of great interest. The various officials, however, with that ingenuity which seems to be innate with such people, no matter what their other limitations may be, discovered that these antique cannon had quite a considerable marketable value, and, consequently, in process of time they all disappeared, converted into current coin, and spent for the delectation of whoever happened to be in a position to steal with impunity at the time.

The view from the ramparts was magnificent, redolent with the full aroma of old romance. But as,

under that blazing, vertical sun, we gazed around, it was quite impossible to avoid feeling desperately saddened that out of such a welter of human suffering, of human bloodshed, something better than this had not emerged for the benefit of mankind. To what profit was this waste? Our own history contains much, very much, that is terrible to read of, but no one can honestly question that in proportion to the increase of the population the sum total of the people's suffering has vastly diminished, and the amount of their joys and comforts have wonderfully increased. So much so that it may well be doubted whether the pauper, in the worst-managed poorhouse in the kingdom, the prisoner in the hardest gaol, is not very much better fed, housed, and generally looked after, than was the honest, thrifty artisan of two hundred years ago. But here we find all the mediæval miseries in full swing. In spite of the fact that Nature has showered her most valuable gifts with the utmost lavishness at the feet of the people, their condition, from the highest to the lowest, is most deplorable. For even those who are at the apex of things are haunted by the grim demons of uncertainty; they cannot tell with any approach of definiteness what their condition will be a few days hence, apart of course from the ordinary human chances of death. While as for the workers, those evil-entreated ones at the base of everything, their condition is so bad

that it must inevitably breed despair and the sense that, no matter what happens, they cannot well be worse off. Which is fatal to any approach of happiness.

Yes, with every desire possible to see the bright side of things, to point out what there is of good in a country, I sorrowfully declare that the state of such a country as this shows no gleam of hope for any of its denizens. All that man could ask from Nature is his in this favoured land—only he needs to behave himself, and treat Nature's gifts gratefully and intelligently. Also he must observe the root principles of truth, honesty and justice, without which Nature lavishes her gifts upon him in vain. Far be it from me to say that the state of any land is hopeless. It might even be possible to cleanse Colombia of the horrible plague of dishonesty, incompetency, and carelessness of the sanctity of human life and freedom; but alas! at present there appears to be no prospect of such an entirely desirable change.

I want to get away. I feel as if the air of the place is infectious; as if a very short stay here will be sufficient to subvert all one's long-entertained notions of man being entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," as the splendid American Declaration of Independence puts it. But we cannot go yet. We have been invited to luncheon at the "Club," and, by some special act of grace, the

ladies of the party are to be admitted. Very well; though not all hungry, for this heavy laden air of Cartagena is by no means conducive to appetite, we will go. Our extremely courteous hosts have done their best to maintain the traditions of British hospitality, and we cannot refuse, although we yearn for the shelter of the ship. So we drove thither (to the Club) and are entertained at luncheon, but—I must tell the truth—so strange was the food, and so curious its quality, that we had to pretend to eat—real eating was quite impossible. I will not go into details, I merely state the facts, not as anything surprising, but as showing how hard it must be for the business man to live here. He must certainly bid farewell to anything in the nature of decent food at all. But I suppose they get used to that in time, as men get used to almost anything.

At last that painful luncheon was over, and we moved down to the railway station, only to find that the cars were all full, and so we were compelled to wait about the grimy shed which was all that did duty for a dépôt. There was much, however, to study in the way of mixed humanity while waiting there, and we were out of the sun. Moreover, we were leaving, and consequently everything was much more bearable than it would otherwise have been. And in a couple of hours we were on board the ship, and steaming away again towards Colon.



If it is thought that I have been petulant and full of carping criticism where I should have been tolerant of a new country and its limitations, I can only say that in a savage country, or a really new country such as I have often visited, I never feel inclined to complain; rather do I feel filled with wonder that I am fed and housed at all. But in a country laying arrogant claim to civilization, among people who have more presumption to the square inch than any others I know, and have less solid claim to support it, I feel astonished that after such experiences I have been so moderate in the way that I have spoken and written of them.



IX

COLON AND JAMAICA AGAIN

NOT even the recollection that we have another visit to pay to Colon again before reaching civilization can damp the ardour of our joy at seeing the last of Cartagena. Many times I have heard that if one wishes to preserve the glamour of romance about certain places it is a great mistake to visit them. Of Constantinople I knew it to be true. Lie in the Golden Horn and view the city, and you will be enchanted; go ashore, and in five minutes you will be disgusted most completely. And that, I should say, will be the experience of the traveller at most places, with the exception of those in Great Britain and Japan, and France. Yes, and Vienna, queen of all cities on earth for spacious beauty. But I had never realized it to the full until I struck Cartagena, and having seen that romantic spot, I bracket it with Panama as a place I most ardently desire never to see again. And I find a peculiar agreement with that feeling among my fellow-voyagers. We are mutually



congratulating ourselves upon having escaped without contracting some deadly disease, and we are each trying to forget those miserable child-faces of the soldiers; but I fear they will ever remain with us. It is so good to get back to the clean, wholesome, comfortable, ship again, and feel her speeding over the splendid sea. During the time we have been on the coast the crew, who did not come for pleasure, have been busy scrubbing, painting, varnishing, until we—the ship that is—are more yacht-like than ever. And we all congratulate one another upon the fact that our stay at Colon will only be of a few hours' duration, after which we shall be free of Central American Republics for some time to come. This makes us all feel like schoolboys let loose for a holiday, while at the same time we have undoubtedly a sub-tone of pity for those of our countrymen whom business compels to remain and try to live under those painful conditions. Still, as we cannot help them, we endeavour to dismiss all our recollections of their hard ways of life, and again give ourselves up to the joys of being on board a fine British ship again, our every want anticipated, and all our cares relegated to some future period when, whether we like it or not, they will certainly fall due. In the mean time we all admit gladly—I am afraid that deep down in our hearts we feel that we are generous in so doing—that the climate of this coast when at sea is almost perfection. And it

must be remembered that we are drawing near to the hottest time of the year. Yet, under the awnings, while gliding along this picturesque littoral, even during the sultriest hours of the day, the heat is by no means difficult to endure, while the early morning hours and those of the night are as near perfection as this beautiful earth affords. Of course it must not be forgotten that we are free from the attentions of that abounding insect life which makes for a Briton one of the chief drawbacks to a tropical sojourn. It is so hard to become accustomed to the attacks of the tiny fiends who seem to forsake all their legitimate occupations, because it is certain that where man is not these creatures abound, and it is unthinkable that they can subsist upon nothing. Yet it is quite certain that as soon as man appears upon the scene, they forsake all other food and fasten upon him as if his blood was a necessary of life to them. Once again we are drawing near to Colon, and I am getting quite weary of finding fresh forms of speech wherein to reply to the sarcastic inquiries whether I am going to have another pleasant trip across to Panama. My shipmates seem to take a mischievous delight in seeing how many different ways I can invent of saying "No," or how emphatic I can make my negative declarations. They also appear to enjoy hearing me give my reasons for refusing to visit Panama again, although they themselves know them very well. But I forgive them



freely; I am so delighted to think that there is really no necessity for me to make that journey again that I am complacency itself. My anticipations have entirely overleaped the few hours that our good ship stays here, and I am already in my mind speeding away from that strip of evil land that has been the grave of so many good men and the scene of so much villainy of every imaginable kind. And yet I cannot help feeling how entirely unamiable a frame of mind that is in which to approach a place wherein there are so many good men and true, striving amid the innumerable difficulties of their position to do their duties manfully which, of course, includes honestly. My reflections were cut short by the arrival of the *Tagus* at the pier in her usual unconcerned fashion, that is, as if she were a row-boat twenty feet long instead of an ocean liner. Perfectly certain that the quiet working of the hydraulic cranes (although one was just outside my window) hoisting in the cargo would not disturb me, I went to my cool and snug berth and sought solace in my pen. Thus the hours flitted by until luncheon and the sweet siesta following thereupon (and who can speak lightly of that golden hour in the tropics) had passed. Then clamouring at my door came an officer, full of rude energy, insisting that I should go ashore and witness a cricket-match between a team selected from the ship's stewards and one from the Colon Cricket Club. Now, to me, all

games such as cricket, football, golf, polo, etc., have no meaning, no charm. I do not seek to decry them, feeling that they have immense uses, but I am not equal to the hypocrisy of getting up an enthusiasm about them that I do not feel in the least. Honestly I cannot remember that from the age of nine I have ever had the time or opportunity to play until I was over forty. An occasioual game of billiards, perhaps, since billiard-marking was one of my many casual employments as a youngster, but since, for the vast majority of men in my position, billiards *could* only be played in public-houses, my games were very, very occasional. But my friend was so insistent, and he seems to make such a personal matter of it, that, with a wistful glance at my strewn table I consented to go with him. It was my first comprehensive view of Colon from the interior, as it were, and I need hardly say that it did not improve upon closer acquaintance. So, as rapidly as possible, we made our way to the cricket-ground, a dried-up swamp (but that I did not know), where the competing teams were already in the thick of the combat. I sat down upon the pseudo turf and watched the play. Before very long, however, I saw that our team stood no earthly chance with the parti-coloured crowd from the home club, who undoubtedly had every advantage on their side. Steward after steward was ignominiously dismissed amid the ironical cheers of the crowd (mostly negroes)



who looked on; and I, feeling that this spectacle was quite a sorry one to be braving that blazing sun for, was casting about for some excuse for retreat, when some one came by and said, "Do you know what you're sitting on?" Of course I answered, "Yes; the good solid earth." But my interlocutor said sarcastically, "Oh no; that's a swamp whereon regiment after regiment of wounded soldiers were dumped down during the last revolution to die, for very few of them got better. And you had much better be sitting on a manure-heap than there as far as danger to your health is concerned." It was enough. Muttering thanks, I rose in haste and sought the water front, the clean sea washing up against the foreshore, along which I could make my way to the ship again. This was a specially favoured walk, because, in the first place, it was delightful to get away from that steamy, feverish life-in-death of the town—that weary flux of humanity enduring most of the ills that flesh is heir to, and many others that it was never intended to endure, to the fascinating study of sea-life. And all along the front it was possible to watch, as in an aquarium, the ways of the fish, their domesticities, their quarrels, their easy absorbing of or absorption by others, and all the varied phases of fish, especially of shell-fish, life. Of that I could never weary, and, moreover, I had no distraction; none of the inhabitants cared to come down there and interview me. When I turned away

at last, finding that the time had come when I was due on board, lo and behold ye! as the washerwomen used to say in Kensal New Town, my way was crossed by an army on the march. A procession, extending as far as I could see in both directions, of green banner-bearers, each one intent upon getting to some invisible bourn with as little delay as possible. Such a sight I had never witnessed before, although it quickly flashed across me that I had read something about it. These were the wonderful parasol ants, myriads of them, each about a quarter of an inch long, bearing erect above their heads fragments of leaves looking curiously like flags, but not in the least like parasols. I was filled with amazement at the strength they displayed, for many of those leaf-fragments bore the same relation to the bearers as a ship's topgallant-sail, flying flag-wise from a twenty-foot stunsail boom, would to a man. Occasionally an eddy of wind would capsize a battalion of the marchers, who, however, immediately struggled to their feet again and resumed their position in the line of march as if nothing had happened. Now and then one, who I should imagine was invested with some authority, but who, nevertheless, carried his banner like any private, would leave the line and gallop—I suppose that is the proper word—back along the route, apparently with the object of seeing that no accidents were happening. Certainly it was not for the purpose of whipping up stragglers,



since stragglers there were none; every individual behaved as if his sole object in life was not only to get *there*, wherever *there* might be, but to get there in the shortest time possible. Fancy commanding a force like that where there were no malingerers, or grumblers, or mutineers! It would, I should think, be the acme of enjoyment to men accustomed to command, but bone-weary of the thousand petty artifices and shifts of unwilling workers. These ants do not carry banners for show, but, as naturalists well know, for a definite purpose connected with agriculture. They plant the pieces of leaves in specially prepared soil, and from them grows a fungus upon which the ants feed, the whole act giving conclusive evidence of prevision and knowledge of the proper means to take to a desired end such as is wanting in many human beings. So interested was I in watching their movements that I almost forgot the time, and when I did remember, it was with reluctance I left the place and hastily returned on board. But a treat was in store for me, of which I had received no warning. The courteous agent of the company, who, I regret to say, was exceedingly ill and attending to his duties under very great difficulties, was on board, and gave me a cordial invitation to visit the oldest European resident of the Isthmus, a gentleman who, of his own free will, had lived there with but scanty intervals of holiday for over fifty years. This alone constituted Mr. Tracy

Robinson a sort of hero in my eyes; and when I further learned that he was an American *gentleman*, I was doubly eager to see him, for, although I admit their rarity, I think American *gentlemen* are about the most delightful specimens of humanity it has ever been my lot to meet. They stand out in such sharp contrast to the usual American, who continually abuses your country and her institutions the while he is supposed to be entertaining you, and incidentally, as certain of their own writers gleefully admit, is "laying his pipes to skin you." As one of the "skinned" under the guise of pure friendship by Americans, I speak feelingly. So at the earliest possible moment I hastened ashore, and found, not one, but two American gentlemen of the very best type. True, they were engaged in business, but business was not the be-all and end-all of their lives. They were both literary men and poets, and their love for literature was of the most catholic and all-embracing description. Mr. J. S. Gilbert, our host, was the local agent of another steamship line, but, like so many dear friends here in England, while he is an essentially good business man, literature, and especially poetry, is the great joy of his life. Therefore, without any fencing for an opening, we plunged into the topic nearest our hearts, and in the discussion of literature generally and poetry in particular, the time flew by. We sat on the verandah of Mr. Gilbert's house, out of sight of the squalor of

Colon, and forgot—at least I did—that there was such a place. Only one thing I regretted then, and that was that I had not met those gentle, genial souls before; to know them only to leave them, probably for ever, so short a time afterwards seemed too sad a waste of one's opportunities. I doubt whether they will ever see these lines, but if they do, I shall feel grateful that they know that the one bright spot in my recollections of the Isthmus is the memory of that most pleasant time spent with them there. I bore away with me two valuable souvenirs of my visit in the shape of two books of poems, "Panama Patchwork," by J. S. Gilbert, and "The Song of the Palm," by Tracy Robinson, which, unlike books of minor poems in general, I have read and re-read with very great delight until I know them almost by heart. Farewell, good men and true, and may you both be well rewarded for your long endurance in Panama.

At last our passenger-list became reinforced by some long-distance voyagers, whereat all hands connected with this part of the ship's economy rejoiced, for of late we have only had casual travellers between port and port on the Spanish main, remaining too short a time to become acquainted with, even if acquaintance with such a curious medley of mixed races were possible, but decidedly interesting as a study of Central American society, with a large S. I have a vivid recollection of one elderly lady of

uncertain origin and rich colour, who took a saloon passage for herself and a second cabin for her attendant, a black youth of about seventeen. Great and grievous was her indignation when she was courteously informed that the said youth could not be allowed to occupy one of the vacant bunks in her cabin, and many were the black venomous-looking cigars that it took to console her for what she considered a most unheard-of injustice on the part of *los oficiales Ingles* towards her. But now, being homeward bound, we once more had the pleasure of welcoming people with whom we could converse upon kindred subjects, who understood the necessity for rules, and to whom decent behaviour is quite normal, not merely a hateful restriction imposed for a period because of the absurd prejudices and fads of *los Inglesos*. Once more we are at sea and happy, the weather being, as usual, lovely in the extreme, and the sense of being bound towards civilization strong upon us all. The well-decks forward and aft are full of negro men and women, returning, let us hope with well-filled pockets, to Jamaica, from their hard work on the Isthmus. They seem to be happy, if song be any proof of lightness of heart. But, be it noted, they sing only hymns, the now time-honoured hymns of Moody and Sankey's collection, of which they have a very full *repertoire* by heart. They commence as soon as the ship is out of the bay, and do



not cease for more than a few minutes by day or night until the harbour of Kingston is reached. But their cheerfulness and adaptation to circumstances is not merely noticeable in their singing. It is entirely instructive and enlightening to notice how these humble black folk behave in what, I am afraid, our labouring folk would consider an environment of utter misery. They are deck passengers, severely restricted as to space, having to huddle together almost in a heap for sometimes three days and two nights, and get what food they need how and when they can. Yet they do not quarrel; they seem to treat the matter as if it were a long picnic, and the children copy their elders. Not only so, but when the time comes for their going ashore, they all appear neat and clean, the transformation having been effected in a most mysterious way, without at all infringing upon the claims of decency, although, of course, there are no dressing-rooms provided. I must say that the behaviour of these deckers all through contrasts most favourably with that of our bank holiday crowds on pleasure bent, although, Heaven knows, there is little enough pleasure in such journeyings as the word is commonly understood. They are conveyed by the company on these long journeys for a very trifling fare, and although they are strictly confined to the decks, every care is taken, by means of awnings, to shelter them. Still, during the rainy season

especially, these deck passages are very trying, and I am glad indeed to add my testimony to the way in which our West Indian British fellow-subjects comport themselves under these by no means easy circumstances.

My delight at revisiting Kingston was great, it seemed so good to be in British territorial waters again, but it was a pale shadow of joy compared with that shown by these poor "deckers," as they are termed officially. Many of them were astir before the first streaks of dawn, and all were ready, with their small belongings lashed up, to spring ashore before ever we had reached the long sandspit of Port Royal. The usual bungling wait took place, although on this occasion both the pilot and his canoe-men were far smarter than on our last arrival. But the wait troubled me not, for I had writing to do below, and that grand passer-away of time served me so well, as usual, that I had to rush on deck somewhat hurriedly after what seemed a very short interval, lest I should miss, what is a never-failing joy to me, the sight of the *Tagus* coming alongside the wharf. But now, as that very necessary but entirely disagreeable operation of "coaling ship" had to be performed, the word was "Go if you want to be comfortable, and go at once." For although everything that deft-handed stewards and keen, clever officers could do to isolate the passenger portion of the ship from the universal



grime obtaining elsewhere was done, it must be realized that there are feats impossible of achievement even at sea, and one of them is the keeping out of coal-dust in blazing tropical weather from even apparently hermetically sealed cabins. Under such conditions the penetrative quality of coal-dust can only be compared to that of the sand in Adelaide during a "brick-fielder," when I have been told, and am not inclined to disbelieve it, that sand has been found upon the documents in cash-boxes locked within a safe in a banker's strong room.

Therefore we fled precipitately to the comfort and beauty of Constant Spring, with a sense, too, of having returned home after a long absence. We were all welcomed as old acquaintances, and found, to our delight, some of our outward passengers. But, as our stay here was to be only three days in length, and as I had engaged myself to pay several visits, I found but little time for loafing, as I did certainly desire to with all my heart. The genial editor of the *Gleaner* had booked me, on the outward visit, to take a long drive with him into the country on my return, and see for myself what the real Jamaica was like. So, nothing loth, I boarded the trolly car and hied me back to Kingston, finding him quite anxious for my reappearance. A smart buggy and pair were waiting, and without loss of time we commenced our journey. His hospitable intention was to take me

away up into the hills to the mansion of a friend of his, Mr. Feurtado, from whose verandah a perfect panorama of Kingston harbour might be obtained. That was one of the principal points of his recommendation of the trip, but, as the negro man says solemnly, "wee-att," Anglicé "wait." Our gingery ponies rattled along the good road from Kingston to Halfway Tree at a great pace, seeming, despite the great heat, to be really delighted to get a chance to let themselves out. And, much to my no doubt ignorant surprise, they did not seem to be nearly as much distressed, or lose nearly as much sweat in that terrible heat, as I have seen our home horses on quite a cool day, after a smart run. In fact, whenever I have been on this trip, I have noticed that the horses seem to stand the heat amazingly well; and as for sun-bonnets, the thing is unthinkable—anybody suggesting such an idea would be looked upon as an amiable lunatic, well intentioned, doubtless, but entirely ignorant of a horse's requirements. Yet the heat of the sun during the hours of, say, 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. during the summer months all over the West Indies is such that if we had one day of it in London, I have no doubt that the newspapers would be full next morning of casualties to men and animals arising from heat. And I do not think it is sufficient explanation to say that the animals are used to it.

That was a memorable drive for many reasons.



First of all, as it should be, by reason of the extreme beauty of the scenery, which I had so much more leisure to admire than on the railway journeys in Costa Rica and Venezuela. Also I had a very intelligent guide with me, my friend Mr. De Lisser being a perfect well of information, into which I had only to dip the bucket of inquiry to have my thirst immediately and gratefully quenched. Upward, ever upward, we drove, through gigantic gorges where mighty trees were moored to apparently barren rocks, and all the intervening spaces between them were thickly woven over by climbing plants of many species, whose stems, like vast snakes, hung dangling down nakedly sometimes to a distance of 150 feet. There were not many flowers—it was not the time for them apparently, but the glorious variety of greenery in all imaginable shades was enough to drive an artist to despair. Wherever a little patch of ground seemed level enough for the purpose, it was cultivated (and I have before noted that the ideal coffee plantation seems to need an angle of about 45°); "provision grounds" as they are termed, where such eatables as yams, sweet potatoes, cocos, cassava, maize, etc., are grown, predominated, of course, as was only to be expected, so near a large town as we were. But there was also a fair sprinkling of banana trees, pimento, and coco plantations, and also some patches of coffee and cotton, although not nearly so much of the latter as I

should have liked to have seen. Every little while we passed a tiny hut with an exiguous area of cultivation around it, where "provision kind" was growing luxuriantly, the beautiful vine of the sweet potato being especially noticeable. Truth compels me to state that the owners of these plots were usually reclining in more or less easy positions within sight of the road, looking like men who had no cares and few wants unsatisfied. But we never saw the female head of the establishment so reposing. If she was not washing (and the amount of washing these coloured women do ought to be sole and sufficient answer to any charges of deliberate uncleanliness that may be brought against them) she was absent on her long trudge to town with produce from the plot to be sold. Some of these squatters—the aristocrats of the race, I presume—owned a donkey, a diminutive but wonderfully useful beast of burden, lightening the lady of the house's labours immensely. Most of them possessed some live stock, a long-nosed, clipper-built pig, a diabolically cunning-looking goat, and some spindle-shanked fowls. The pig and the fowls I can understand, but why these goats, except as queer pets? A female goat will, if properly handled, produce considerable milk, *vide* the Maltese milk-supply, but as far as my observation goes, the majority of these small-holding goats were of the male persuasion, fit only to do mischief, and keep the household wondering what



they would do next. Perhaps the squatters eat them occasionally, although I was assured that they did not. The children, happy, care-free little ebony creatures, innocent of garb, except an occasionally brief shirt, seemed to have generally a delightful time. I could not help contrasting their lot with the children of our own slums at home. No F. A. F. needed for them, or special collections to provide them with meals. Surely if any children should be happy these were. Their little round bellies and sleek skins bore eloquent testimony to their being well fed, and their movements were, so far as one could see, absolutely uncontrolled. In the original home of their ancestors they would have been liable at any moment to be borne off as slaves, or slaughtered by the raiders as being unmarketable; here their prospects in life would have been deemed enviable by any child in our own favoured land, until he had learned that to eat and drink, play in the warm air unembarrassed by clothes, and sleep when and where he listed, were not the highest aims in life or the highest good for man.

But we are mounting upward rapidly now, and I begin to feel less comfortable than I did. For it must be admitted that whoever made and graded these roads had but scant consideration for the nerves of folks who, all unaccustomed to such travelling, might have to use them. A sudden climb, requiring all the energy of the horses to accomplish, would appear to terminate



on the edge of a precipice whose bottom was lost in mist. But upon reaching that jumping-off place there would be a sudden twist of the horses' heads so sharply round that they appeared to be meditating a plunge into the interior of the carriage, and with a most menacing creaking and groaning of the whole equipage it would turn upon its axis, its hind wheels sending fragments of the road hurtling into the dimness below, while a new road would open up in front with as steep a descent as the former ascent had been. Several times, indeed, I respectfully declined to remain in the carriage, not at all liking the view into infinity I was favoured with at the bottom of the extremely slanting way we were descending, but I was constantly assured by my genial host that there was an entire immunity from accidents—that these drivers constantly made the journey by night and by day. I made a mental reservation immediately that I would not give them the opportunity of testing their skill upon me by night, the journey down even by day loomed before me fraught with gigantic possibilities of disaster.

However, the occasional thrills induced by my anticipations of a sudden descent of us all in one indistinguishable heap into one of the gorges beneath us, did not prevent my very great enjoyment of the whole of that superb drive. As we rose into another climate, I saw that cultivation increased and became more systematic. Here were large plantations of



pimento and cocoa, but, alas! through several of them the wide swaths mown by the last hurricane were painfully apparent. Nature, aided by the efforts of the planters, was doing her best to repair the damage done to the results of the labour of years by that awful meteor in a few minutes, but it was evident that several seasons must pass yet before the young trees were in full bearing. Then suddenly, by way of a steeper road than any we had yet traversed, with turns almost doubling back upon it, we emerged upon a plateau, whereon stood the picturesque old house of the gentleman we had come to visit, Mr. Feurtado.



X

JAMAICA AND BACK TO TRINIDAD

It may perhaps be accounted to me for cowardice, but I was really relieved when we arrived at Mr. Feurtado's hospitable house, feeling that for the present, at any rate, I was free from the incubus of that journey, interesting and delightful on the whole as it had been. And I was now in a society totally different from any that I had ever before mingled with. My host, his charming wife, and his friends were of a type that I had never before had an opportunity of studying. Well bred and kindly, handsome and genial, they were as far removed from the English type of people as anything could well be. In fact, my host was black, but comely, and a perfect gentleman if ever there was one. And all the people present except myself were of the swarthy hue spoken of in Othello, but, none the less, with them I felt perfectly at ease. Everything that they could do to show me how they appreciated my visit they did, and I enjoyed their company as much as it was possible to do. But I had not been there very long before an incident



occurred which explained to me something that I had long wondered at. In common with many of my countrymen, I have often been surprised at the Continental strictures upon the behaviour of English folk abroad—their disregard of all the *convenances* of life, to say nothing of the feelings of the people among whom they are journeying. And I was very much annoyed, feeling that the remarks were not only exaggerated, but that they were not even remotely true, because I could not imagine my countrymen and women behaving so rudely and blatantly.

Now, however, I was to be disagreeably enlightened. A party of men and women—I will not call them gentlemen and ladies—appeared in front of the house. We—the party within—were at afternoon tea. Mr. Feurtado rose, and, apologizing for leaving us, went to meet the new-comers. They came right up the front steps and into the house, strolled round the drawing-room, and took stock of us who were sitting at tea, as if we might be some curious specimens of humanity that they had never seen before. At last they seated themselves, and Mr. Feurtado rang for tea for them, I wondering all the time why he did not introduce his just-arrived friends to us. After a somewhat lengthy stay they departed, and our host, after accompanying them to their carriages, rejoined us. Some time after I ventured to say to him, for I admit that my curiosity was very great, "Your friends

did not make a very long stay, sir." "My friends!" said he, with some surprise. "I never saw them or heard of them before. They are tourists visiting the island, and have come up here to see the view. Incidentally they came into my house, and I showed them round. It is only common politeness on my part, but I often think that they do not seem to appreciate it very much." And then he changed the subject. But think of it, ladies and gentlemen! Imagine, if you can, a party of Frenchmen or Germans walking into your house uninvited, unannounced, as if it were a museum, and you the custodian thereof. Even then it would hardly be thinkable that they should invade your private apartments and——. But I must not say any more upon the subject, for I feel so indignant and hurt that I should certainly utter something I could wish recalled by-and-by.

As the evening drew on I became quite uneasy, and even the prospect of watching the glorious tropical sunset from that great elevation, and with that mighty panorama spread before me, could not lessen my dread of the downward journey in the dark. But really I was grieved to leave that wonderful scene. On either side of us were the vast ramparts of the verdure-clad mountains; before us, in one splendid sweep, their slopes descended to the level plain of Kingston, looking like a toy town or an architect's rough plan. Beyond it lay the shining waters of the harbour, just

taking on the first of the wondrous succession of shades of colour that would reach their climax in the sunset-time. Dotted about that beautiful level were tiny cock-boats—as they appeared—really great ocean-going steamers, and our own beautiful *Tagus*, easily distinguishable among them all with her double, cream-coloured funnels, looked as if I could take her up in my arms like a child's toy. Far beyond appeared the dim outlines of Port Royal bounding the harbour, and grimly suggesting the myriads of good British men who had succumbed to its deadly climate in bygone days before sanitation and the malaria-disseminating habits of the mosquito were understood, and consequently could not be guarded against. And beyond all the Eternal Sea.

Nevertheless, I could not face the prospect of a night journey down, even with the promise of all that transcendent beauty when the sunset rays should glorify everything before me as even I could hardly imagine it; and so I insisted upon leaving at once, much to the dismay of my newly found friends, who, I verily believe, had made up their minds that I should stay until midnight. But I was inexorable, and in a very few minutes the farewells, as sincere and voluminous as if we had been friends for years, had been said, and the thoroughly rested ponies were plunging down the steep descent at what seemed to me to be break-neck speed.

If the journey up had been exciting, the return fully answered all my anticipations of its being much more so. But I continually discounted the thrills I should have experienced, by getting out of the buggy at peculiarly diabolical-looking turns of precipitous descent and walking, while the ponies slid and squattered amid the flying pebbles. Still, I had time to admire the minor beauties of the way, especially the wonderful buttress-like stems of the gigantic ceibas or silk-cotton trees that rose majestically from either side of the road. As I noted before, there was but little change in the colours owing to the absence of flowers; but as we came to openings across the ravines, and the sun's declining rays lit up the great intervening spaces, the changeful beauty of the view was intensely satisfying. And about halfway down (we came by a different route) a concourse of villagers were congregated about an unfinished building. They were sitting in easy, unconventional attitudes, as if they were discussing the progress of the work; and as we halted, the principal man among them hailed my friend with great courtesy, and an animated conversation ensued of which I understood, perhaps, one word in ten. And I thought I understood polyglot English fairly well. So I do, but I confess that the quaint *patois* used by the West Indian negro gives me pause. However, when we resumed our journey, my friend gave me to understand that the gentleman of colour



who had spoken to him was extending his premises, and had been informing him of the progress of affairs. Quite unconscious that I was asking anything out of the way, I inquired how long the work had been progressing, and was told *two years!* Ah me! it is a leisurely land. And why not? Why should the stress and hurry of modern civilization penetrate into these lotus-eating nooks? As long as the workers are happy, and contented to do a day's work and discuss it for a week, being well fed, sufficiently clothed, and having no care, I cannot for the life of me understand why they should be converted to the gospel, if gospel it be, of "git up and git." I know that this is sad heresy, but I do not know how one is to avoid thinking it, if he does not say it, when he sees how entirely satisfied and happy these children of the sun appear to be.

After leaving the hamlet our road down was fairly easy, and we arrived at the hotel in good time for dinner, the willing little horses not at all distressed, and our sable driver as full of glee over the satisfactory termination of his drive as we were. Altogether, it had been a most pleasant day, and now, under the verandah, we enjoyed our evening meal, looking out upon the glories of the tropic night, and rejoicing in the never-ceasing chorus of the cicalas and the myriad antics of the fairy light-bearers that filled the air with luminous streaks. My friend and I discussed many

matters which I do not dwell upon here, having made up my mind to eschew all political subjects in print. Yet it is very difficult, since politics in some form or another will enter into every phase of our lives, and it is impossible to avoid them. One thing I must say, and that is, that I find a growing feeling out here that, in spite of the undoubted loyalty of these island populations to Great Britain, it is impossible for them to avoid the conclusion that they are fated sooner or later to become an appanage of the Great Republic. You see, they are so near to America, and her markets are so omnivorous, her representatives are so strenuous, while our people are so apt to consider that there is no need to alter their *laissez faire* attitude, that no other conclusion seems possible. I hate the idea, but when every man you meet has the notion that the West Indies are not worth the fight that Britain will have to wage to retain them, and that they are worth any effort on the part of the United States to capture them, what is an unbiassed outsider to say if he wishes to record his impressions honestly? Well, I should say he had better face the facts, state them, and take the consequences. At any rate, I have one comforting thought in connection with my present mission, and that is, that no matter what flag they are under, the West Indies will always be interesting to visit, and can never be other than an ideal winter resort for people who can afford the moderate inclusive



fare demanded by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company for a tour round them. Also, I have little fear of the Americans ousting us from our shipping trade thither, judging from their handling of the International Shipping Combine.

The pleasant remaining hours of my stay in Kingston fled all too quickly, my only regret being that I was unable to make the circuit of the beautiful island, and revisit some of the scenes of my youthful voyaging, notably Falmouth and Savannah le Mar. But that was out of the question, and very soon the time arrived for me to bid a long farewell to my hospitable Jamaican friends and turn my attention towards the new cruise awaiting me at Barbados. We were bound hence to Trinidad *en route* for Barbados and home, and at this time of the year the passage across the Caribbean Sea is arduous enough to satisfy any voyager who, like the old sailor in the fo'c'sle story, has got tired of "yer everlastin' blue skies and smooth seas," and pines for a little channel winter weather. I am afraid that the seasoned voyagers smiled somewhat superciliously when they saw the homeward passengers embarking (the *Tagus* was to be a crammed-full ship going home), as knowing that when we met that stern inset of the Equatorial current *and* the now strenuous Trades, there would be a plentiful lack of festivity on board.

However, there is a certain fatality and finality

about the movements of a ship belonging to a well-managed steamship line, and punctually at the hour appointed, the *Tagus* moved majestically away, amid the cheering of the motley crowd lining the wharf. It is all done so automatically, to all appearance, that the average passenger is far too apt to think that it is a sort of "touch the button, and the rest is done" arrangement, and forget the many hard years that go to the making of a seaman such as commands one of these fine ships. It is all over soon, the agony of parting, that is one comfort, and the just-aboard voyagers begin to settle down, all unconscious of what awaits them when once the sandspit of Port Royal is passed. We, that is, the *old* passengers, move about among the half-distracted new-comers with a certain calm air of superiority, of pity for their obvious strangeness to their surroundings which is *so* characteristic of the passenger who has made even the shortest previous passage in the ship. It is a silly pose, but an almost universal one, and it is very amusing to watch, even in one's self. However, once clear of Port Royal, and settled down for the long stretch across to Trinidad, we all have other things to think about, for our anticipations and warnings of the behaviour of the Caribbean Sea out of the tourist season are abundantly satisfied. The Trades rise to the force of a gale, and a "dead muzzler" too at that. The current, too, is right against us, and with these

twin forces of nature to combat, the noble engines of the *Tagus* have all their work cut out to keep the good ship up to time. I feel exceedingly sympathetic with the chief engineer, whose carefully saved coal begins to melt away under the stern necessity of giving her all the steam that can be made. It is hard when you have been economising coal all the voyage, and perhaps have been gloating over your coal account, to get such a set-back as this, and find all your savings going in order to make contract time.

But to those of us who have leisure, and nothing to lose by delay, it was a splendid spectacle, and if we are proof against sea-sickness, a most enjoyable one, this fine ship being driven relentlessly forward to her goal against the steady thrust of the strenuous gale, and the insidious gliding back of the whole body of water in which she floats—the beginning really of the mighty Gulf Stream. Still, however much we may enjoy this object-lesson of man's supremacy over the forces of Nature, our sympathies must be with the sufferers who can neither eat, drink, or sleep, and to whom the word comfort has lost its meaning, despite their cleanly and even luxurious surroundings. So that, balancing one thing against another, no one is in the least sorry when, punctually to time, the *Tagus* steams again to her moorings where the muddy flood of the Orinoco meets the blue waters of the Gulf of Paria, and the anchor rattles down off Port of Spain.

Our stay here being even more brief than usual, I did not go ashore, keeping that pleasure in reserve for a later day, when I knew I should have time to investigate the beauties of which I had heard so much. The few hours here were, indeed, busy ones, and I "laid low" in the stern of the ship, fishing and avoiding the ceaseless come and go of passengers, etc., while admiring the wonderful celerity with which the business was conducted. Punctually to the minute of the advertised time the big slave on the fo'c'sle had set his teeth to his work, and torn the great anchor from its muddy bed, the *Tagus*, docile and diligent as ever, turned on her heel and glided northwards on her homeward journey. But before she had covered half the distance to the Mono pass, that narrow way between the two mountains which I have before described, she was met by a tropical storm of thunder, lightning, and rain. The latter fell as it only can fall in the tropics—in a solid sheet of water with a roar almost like the voice of Niagara. It was impossible to proceed, for sight and hearing of anything but the deluge was out of the question. So the engines were stopped, and the big ship waited, the anxious officers on the bridge exposed to all the fury of that torrent, peering out from under the peaks of their sou'-westers for the first sign of a break. For a full hour we lay thus, and then, a streak of light appearing, the engine-room gongs sounded, and she



moved slowly forward on her way. And when, the narrows passed and the ship making full speed for Barbados, the captain appeared at dinner, genial and smiling as usual, no one but those in the secret could imagine or appreciate what a soul-wearing time he had endured up there, with all his responsibilities upon him, and his long previous reputation at stake. Very soon after leaving the frowning Bocas, the weather fined, and we looked back upon a land that was gloomy and forbidding to the sight, apparently blanketed with massive nimbus clouds, a place where never a gleam of light could penetrate any more. But it was pleasant to reflect that the morrow would bring again to that fair land its glorious golden light and that the steaming floods that had fallen would give a fresh spurt to the wealth of profitable vegetation.

Daylight brought the view of Carlisle Bay, Barbados, and a pretty testimony to the punctuality of the Royal Mail ships. For as we steamed majestically up to our buoy, we saw converging upon the anchorage the graceful forms of the *Solent*, the *Esk*, and the *Eden*, the three inter-island or "station" steamships bound inward to Barbados to meet the mail steamer for home from the northern islands, from Venezuela, and from Demerara. Within fifteen minutes of each other the four ships were moored, and the work of transhipping cargo and passengers to the

Tagus for home had begun and was being carried on with the utmost celerity, since the departure of the mails for home must not on any account be delayed if delay can by any means be avoided. For myself, the unpleasant task of parting from those bright, congenial officers had to be faced. We had been shipmates for seven weeks nearly, and so speedy is the growth of good fellowship on such a cruise as this, that I could not help feeling that I had known and appreciated them for years. But so busy was the time that no long leave-taking could be indulged in, which was so much to the good, and immediately after breakfast I transported my belongings to the *Eden* in readiness for the next cruise. I was very agreeably surprised on my boarding this yacht-like ship, to find how commodious she was. One does get his ideas so enlarged by being in a big vessel, that he doubts the possibility of being as well accommodated in a ship half or one third the size. Also I was somewhat surprised to find that these station ships were so well manned and officered. Indeed, there was very little difference between them and the big ships in point of numbers, four officers beside the captain, purser, and doctor, and chief steward; also there were five engineers, or as many as a first-class battleship used to carry when I sailed in them as correspondent. I suppose that the hands and stewards came somewhat cheaper, being, as one might reasonably have expected,



all coloured men, our fellow-subjects in the West Indies.

Having settled everything on board to my great satisfaction, and been welcomed with much kindness, I bade farewell to my new hosts for the time, as I had many visits to pay ashore. The Marine Hotel awaited me with all its comforts, and Captain Owen's steam-launch was at my disposal for going between the ship and the shore. But I did not trouble the ship much during her wait for the outward mail steamer, for there were many points of interest in this beautiful island that claimed attention. First of all a visit to Codrington College, that wonderful monument reared by old Sir Christopher Codrington, which has supplied so many earnest and godly ministers to the West Indies. I am not going to attempt a detailed description of the college as I saw it in its placid calm, as it is well-known, but a few impressions may not be deemed tedious. The journey thither from Bridgetown is made by carriage, and is about fifteen miles as near as I can remember, rather a long distance for two horses, for it is usual for the return journey to be made shortly after arrival. So, as the merciful man is merciful to his beast, I should advise a trip to the Crane Hotel, and the engaging there of another carriage from the courteous landlord. Indeed, the point of Barbados upon which the Crane Hotel is built is well worth a visit, and, if the visitor is

vigorous, he may enjoy a bathe in the roaring surf from the hotel bath-house that will long linger in his memory. And he will find his creature comforts very well attended to in the bargain.

From thence to the college is a beautiful drive of about six miles. The approach to the fine old building is through a magnificent avenue of those amazingly artificial-looking trees, the Palmiste palms. I have repeatedly been assured that they have no commercial value, but I do not believe that there is another tree in the whole vegetable kingdom that can so simulate an artificial production as does this one. A beautiful, curved column of rough wood, *roughened* I should say, since the corrugations are not extensive, and at a little distance are hardly discernible, springs from the ground almost like the bulb of a hyacinth in a vase. According to the age of the tree this rough column rises a number of feet into the air and suddenly terminates in a shaft of smooth, pure green. This shaft, looking like polished jade, rises from four to ten feet farther, and terminates in a plume of feathery leaves, whose midribs are sometimes twenty feet long, while the side-spreading greenery is from six inches to thirty-six. But at the time of budding there appear at the junction of the rough bark and the green column a series of green clubs which contain the flowers. These clubs project upwards all around the trunk, and when they



are ripe, burst and exhibit the efflorescence—I cannot say the flower, since there is no blossom, only something like an exaggerated green seed-spathe. These palms, in the approach to Codrington College, rise to a uniform height of, I should say, seventy-five feet, and look as regular as the columns in a cathedral. On either side of their straight lines there are beautiful lawns of emerald green, bordered with shrubs that simply blaze with colour. These lawns run down to limpid lakes, which reflect all the glories of the tropical vegetation around, for they are perfect mirrors in this sheltered position.

Then the grey old building, up which beautiful plants climb, lies before the visitor, embowered in loveliness and basking in peace. Here, if anywhere, the devoted student may study God in nature, and nature as God's expression. On the further side, well-kept lawns and shrubberies slope down to the azure sea, and on the right a low building covers in a swimming-bath of almost icy cold water direct from a spring which emerges into the light there for the first time. In this splendid restorative the humid students disport themselves after their studies or their games. I inquired of my guide whether it was not dangerous to pass so rapidly with a superheated body into so cold a medium, and he answered, with a rather disdainful shrug, that he had never known of any ill effect resulting from such a practice. Well,

he must know, but I confess that I should have expected something different. But I remembered the sudden transitions of the Turkish bath, and was silent.

Then we sauntered around the building to where we had left our carriage, and behold, a monkey, a black, furry creature, strongly reminding me of the grass monkeys we used to buy in Java. Knowing something of the quite uncertain ways of these animals, I did not cultivate a close acquaintance with him, contenting myself with standing well beyond his reach — he being chained — and making him a few offerings of fruit and biscuits. And then my courteous guide and I said farewell to each other. And I held out my hand in parting, shaking the gentleman's warmly, but as I did so that monkey sprang out at me, and, I make no doubt, that, if he could have broken his chain, he would have given me an exceedingly bad few minutes. Wonderingly, I asked my guide what I could have done to put the animal in such a passion with me, when he told me, to my great surprise, that it was pure affection on Jacko's part for him. He had owned the animal for fifteen years, and it was so passionately attached to him as to be intensely jealous of any one else who even spoke to him, but if any one so much as touched his master, as I had done unwittingly, he was always nearly frantic with rage. And, indeed, he looked to



me as if he would take a long time to recover his equanimity.

Bidding farewell to the beautiful spot, with its old-world air of innermost peace, we drove back to the Crane, and, after one of the pleasantest afternoons I have ever spent, returned to the Marine Hotel in the balmy cool of the evening, along the pretty country roads, where the care-free families of small proprietors were sitting at their hut doors in perfect contentment, indulging in the usual aimless chatter of all country communities, or were sauntering along the roads, leading goats to graze on the scanty herbage fringing the cane-fields. I presume that there is some bye-law forbidding them to allow their goats to range whithersoever they will, since the omnivorous habits of these quaint animals are well-known, and they would doubtless play havoc with the growing crops. But I never grew tired of noting the patience of the negroes as they lounged by the roadside holding their goats by a piece of string from going farther in their search for sustenance than the edge of the cultivated land.

Next morning by the advice of my genial guide, philosopher, and friend, Captain Owen, the Royal Mail Company's superintendent, I started, at 7.30 a.m., on the toy railway that bisects the island, for a visit to the watering-place, as we should call it, of Bathsheba. I understood that it would be worth while spending the day there, and that I should find



the accommodation good, so I went fully prepared to see and be seen, for the tourists of this pretty place may at least be sure that whatever else they may fail in, they will certainly afford considerable gratification to the indigenous population, if only in the contemplation of strangers. The latter part of the road which lay along the sea-coast of the island opposite to Bridgetown reminded me very strongly of the journey round the Isle of Man by the electric railway. Also it raised a grave question in my mind. I had been repeatedly assured by most competent authorities that Barbados alone, among the West Indian Isles, showed no traces of volcanic agency, and Sir Daniel Morris, the courtèous and talented Minister of Agriculture for all the West Indies, had strongly impressed the same view upon me. Yet, in view of those enormous rock-masses which lay piled in heaps all along the beach, what was I to think? I have seen lava in all its forms all over the world, notably in the South Pacific, and have grown to believe that I cannot mistake its honeycombed surfaces wherever I see them. And if those masses of rock off the coast of Barbados were not lava (*pace* all the authorities), then I have never seen any lava at all.

But I am a little premature, for while travelling even at the leisurely rate of the aforesaid toy railway, it was impossible for me to examine the rocks carefully. However, as soon as I had reached the pretty



village of Bathsheba and made my arrangements at the comfortable little hotel of Beachmount, I sauntered down to the beach, the tide being well out, and scrutinized the nearest masses of rock very closely. And I found as I expected, that they were huge lava fragments, not torn from any cliffs on shore, for there were none that they could have been detached from, but hurled up from the sea-bed, ejected by some submarine volcano, who knows how long ago. That they had been under water for a very long time was obvious from the many coraline formations with which they were studded, but as to their general structure they were identical with the water-worn lava masses in the South Seas, over which I had so often trudged with bleeding feet in my old whaling days. And if the whole of the Royal Geological Society were to declare I was wrong, I am still obstinate enough to hold to my own conviction. But I admit most freely that, as far as I have seen, there are no evidences of Plutonic agency *in* the island proper.

XI

THE NORTHERN TOUR

THAT was a pleasant, restful day at Bathsheba, mostly spent in prowling about the beach. Bathing was out of the question—for me, at any rate—as the negro young folks trooped down to watch what the "buckra" was doing and to beg of him. I am sorry to say a single word not in praise of Barbados; but it is a fact, as far as my observation goes, that it holds the palm for beggars among all our islands. Men, women, and children beg without any reason if they perceive a likely subject—do it apparently as a matter of routine, and not at all because they have any need of alms. For the actual signs of want are strikingly absent, much to the credit of all concerned, since incomes must in the nature of things be exceedingly small. But I noticed, much to my satisfaction, that the pure white natives did not beg. Two or three of the dear little white children—bless their absolutely colourless little faces!—did come and offer shells for sale, but they were as well-behaved as it is possible for children to be, and not at all importunate.



I left Bathsheba after a most restful time, and arrived in Bridgetown, feeling that I should be ready for any amount of sight-seeing on the morrow. And it was just as well I did, for I found that my indefatigable friend, Captain Owen, had arranged for me to visit two sugar-plantations the next day, as I had expressed a wish so to do. The fact is, that on my last visit to the Island (before this cruise), thirty years ago, I had trudged out to a plantation, and been very well received, in spite of the fact that I was a youngster of no importance whatever. And I was anxious to see what, if any, had been the alterations, as far as my memory would serve, in the surroundings and methods obtaining to-day as compared with thirty years ago. Early next morning, therefore, I took a carriage and drove out to the first of the two plantations to which I had introductions. Arriving there, I was simply astounded to find that every detail, from the cutting down of the "kee-an" (local pronunciation of "cane"), was as familiar to me as if I had been there all my life. There was not, so far as I could see, the slightest alteration in anything. The furnaces burning "trash" (the fibre of the cane after it has passed through the rollers of the mill, and the juice has been squeezed out of it), the long row of boiling pans on one side of the sugar-house, from the first introduction of the pure cane juice to be mixed with lime, to the last pan where the thickened juice had become sugar, and was being baled

out into the troughs where the granulating frames were being slowly revolved on it by hand; the large, shallow, wooden receptacles, where the product was slowly cooling and draining, and the big warehouse full of hogsheads of sugar still draining; all was as it had been thirty years before. The superintendent was an aged man, who had been thus engaged all his working life, and seemed even now to lack no energy, although he was close upon eighty. With great courtesy he showed me all that was to be seen, but did not appear at all astonished when I commented upon the absence of all change. He attributed it to the perfection of the method principally, but also in some measure to the necessity for employing as much labour as possible, the island being over-populated, in his opinion. But I will not go into this highly controversial subject here.

I noted the absence of a distillery here, remembering as I did very vividly that feature of the estate and mill that I had been over many years before. My informant said that there never had been one—they had always sold their molasses and refuse from which rum was distilled, and did so now. Then he invited me to his pretty, but lonely house. He had reared a large family, every member of which had prospered, married, and left him, and now in his very old age he was entirely alone. Which I thought sad. I did not spend long in his house, nor did he press me to stay,



or offer me refreshment of any kind. Not that I needed anything, but, remembering the boisterous Barbadian hospitality of olden days, I was somewhat surprised.

Then I drove off to another plantation, but, as it was almost a facsimile of the one I had just left, I did not go over it. Moreover, the agent or superintendent, who had some grown-up daughters to keep him company, seemed to me like a man distraught with some great loss, so I felt as if I was intruding at an inopportune time, and hastened away, satisfied that whatever changes there may have been in Barbados in my early days, there had been none in the sugar industry, and, remembering the condition of the sugar trade, I was more than convinced of the necessity for the planters to turn their attention to the raising of cotton, both for economic and Imperial reasons. But discussion of a question like this is entirely beyond my province, and I therefore leave it severely alone.

Upon returning to the hotel, I was informed that the mail steamer was in, and I consequently made my preparations for departure, knowing that my ship would be sailing that afternoon. Upon getting down to Bridgetown, I was almost deafened by the bustle, and, as there was a strong breeze blowing, and the heat was very great, the dust was almost blinding. Everybody in the street seemed full of important business,

and I felt that it was no place for a loafer like me, so I fled to my ship. The "canash" was almost packed with craft, and when my boat emerged into the bay the scene was most animated, what with the heavy craft being driven from shore to ship, and from ship to shore, through the rough water, and the many watermen's boats with passengers in transit. I had thought of visiting the mail ship, but a glance at the condition of things on board and around her decided me to do nothing to add to the cares of her officers, who, I felt sure, were in no case to be pestered with inquisitive strangers like myself, with no excuse whatever for their intrusion. So I decided to go on board the *Eden*, and make myself at home, pending our departure for the north.

The time passed very quickly in watching the busy scene, and punctually at the advertised time all four ships departed on their several journeys, leaving Carlisle Bay to the comparative quiet succeeding mail-day. It was very pretty to see the ships all gliding away into the gathering dark on their several journeys, and interesting to remember how eagerly their advent was being awaited in the various out-of-the-world spots whither they were bound. The weather was beautiful, and the deck tempting in its coolness and quiet after the bustle and heat of the day, but I felt the call of the flesh soon after dinner, and slipped away to my cosy cabin, with the hum of the electric



fan like that of a benevolent bee lulling me off to sleep. Most successfully, too, for I did not awake until daylight, when I hurried on deck in time to watch our entrance into the beautiful harbour of Port Castries, St. Lucia; the principal coaling-station for the British Navy in the West Indies, and one of the most picturesque of our possessions out there. It is a striking contrast in its mountainous contours to the low island of Barbados, and to any one knowing the history of the battles between French and English for its possession, it presents a standing series of puzzles as to how mortal men could ever succeed in taking its heights from an enemy, fortified as they were by every device then known to keep out an invading force. But we have, after expressing our wonder, to fall back upon the accomplished fact, the thing was done, and English soldiers did it. They hold those heights to-day, and the visitor has pointed out to him the various fort-crowned peaks which command the bay, and, as a contrast, the ruins of those fortifications which have been abandoned as no longer possessing any strategical value. It should be an easy harbour to defend against the onslaught of an invading fleet, for the entrance is narrow and tortuous as well as being exposed to the fire of the forts of the adjacent hills. I cannot say that the commercial activity of the place seemed to be, except in the matter of coal, of any importance, but that may have been a mere

accident, owing to the time of our arrival. Certainly the chief value of St. Lucia to us lies in the fact of its being our West Indian coaling-station; and that is being discounted, for during my stay I learned that an order had just been issued for the cessation of all work on the great new barracks at Morne Fortunée, a peak rising eight hundred feet above the sea, and the site of the principal camp. A friend and I were provided with a carriage by the courtesy of the Company's agents, and we drove by a winding road right up to the summit of this commanding peak without at all distressing the sturdy horse that served us. It was a delightful drive in the cool freshness of the morning, for at nearly every turn of the road wonderful views of the bright blue sea beneath us, of the adjacent peaks, or of the busy harbour were afforded us. Halfway up we passed the beautiful residence of the Governor, to whom I had an introduction, but not liking to trouble him at so early an hour, we pursued our journey to the summit. Here are many piles of building, all the accommodation necessary, in fact, for the housing of a large body of men, who I should think, in all our possessions abroad, would hardly find a healthier or more picturesque spot than this. But I saw very few men about; probably they were away on various duties, and only the garrison servants were much in evidence. There were the great carcases of the barracks, whose building had been so suddenly

stopped, with just a few workmen and female hod-carriers doing, I suppose, a few indispensable jobs before they too were discharged and the work ceased altogether.

I lingered long in this beautiful place, for the air was so pure, the silence so profound, and the view in every direction so splendid, that I was loth to descend. Also the time of our stay here was so brief that I did not feel inclined to attempt a visit to the wonders of the Souffrière sulphur springs, or take any other of the fine drives for which St. Lucia is famous. But then I have never been given to rushing about sight-seeing; I had much rather take things leisurely than make a toil of such a pleasure as this, leaving that for younger or more energetic tourists. So I stayed up here until warned by my watch that the hour of sailing was drawing near; then I bade my driver fetch his horse away from the sweet grass he had been quietly cropping to his heart's content, and we took our downward course, feeling every few minutes the rise in temperature as we changed our level, until we reached the main street of Castries and emerged upon the wharf in a blaze of heat and a smother of coal-dust. Stepping on board from the noisy wharf as soon as I could, I looked out upon the harbour, noting with great interest that the natives, by whom, of course, I mean the negroes, had retained the aboriginal models of canoes—indeed, these islands of St. Lucia and

St. Vincent were among the last lodging-places of the original inhabitants—the Caribs, and I fancied that I could see traces of Indian physiognomy in many of the coloured folks, especially the fishermen. The fishing here is, I am told, very good, but I had no opportunity of testing it, for the ship went alongside the wharf; and where that is the case, and the traffic is in steamers, there is never any satisfactory fishing to be done—the churning of the propellers frightens them away. However, there was little time left for fishing, had I been so disposed and had the prospects of a catch been ever so good, for on this part of the trip the stay at St. Lucia is always brief. For the English mails are being most eagerly awaited all along the Antilles, and no delay is permitted that is avoidable.

Of course one gets used to anything in time, but somehow I have always felt that peculiar dignity and importance attaches to those in charge of a mail ship. When you come to think of what her safe arrival and punctual delivery of mails mean to so many thousands, every bag freighted with its load of tragedy, its shower of blessing; and, in any case, every missive a connecting-link between the little world to which it is delivered and the great world without. It may be asked why I do not, in my usual attempt to do justice to all, mention the poor postman, who is at the bottom of the scale, in this grand business of intercommunication

throughout the world. Believe me, I do remember him and look upon his calling, laborious and scantily paid as it is, with the same romantic interest that I find in that of the captain of a splendid mail steamer, the wonderful business of linking up the scattered inhabitants of this globe of ours, however far sundered by envious distance.

The bell sent forth its clangorous warning three times, and at the last strokes the warps were cast off, the propeller revolved, and the *Eden*, after swinging slowly out into the bay, was headed for Martinique, the next island in her northern itinerary. Our passage thither was entirely uneventful and pleasant, and three hours after leaving St. Lucia we sighted the splendid mountains of the great French island, now alas! the scene of so much misery, in consequence of the fearful cosmic outbreak of two years ago. This island was one of the earliest discovered, Columbus having landed there, not far from the site of the ill-fated St. Pierre, in the middle of June, four hundred and two years ago. Nearly a century and a half afterwards two French adventurers took possession of it, and for another two centuries it was the scene of many a bloody encounter between French and English, changing hands several times, but finally remaining a French colony, all the aboriginal inhabitants having been slain by the colonists. What food for the imagination there is in the last clause of the preceding

sentence, I leave to the mental digestion of my readers. But, as it is the same in the history of so many colonies under so many flags, it is quite unnecessary to linger over it, dreadful as the facts are.

St. Pierre, which was justly considered the finest town in the West Indies, was, as is now universally known, totally destroyed, with all its inhabitants (some 30,000 save one) on the 8th of May, 1902. This ranks as one of the most terrible calamities in the history of the world, both for the suddenness and completeness of the destruction ensuing. And there can be little doubt that it dealt a blow at the colony that it will take many years to recover from, if indeed it ever does do so. However, I will leave St. Pierre for the present, as our objective was Fort de France, a port with a splendid harbour, the seat of Government of the colony, and the naval station. For the life of me, I cannot understand why St. Pierre should have been so much larger and more flourishing, seeing that there is only an open roadstead there, exposed to the full force of wind and sea, and, moreover, that it was right under the shadow of Mont Pelée, as it were, a volcano that had never showed signs of extinction, and, like Vesuvius, was a perpetual menace to the people living upon its flanks. But towns have a habit of growing in spite of their natural disadvantages, in a way that baffles the inquirer. It is



due, no doubt, to a variety of causes, the correlation of which is usually beyond the ability of writers.

We entered Fort de France at 2 p.m., and fired our gun, denoting the arrival of the mail from Europe. The place looked to me quite prosperous, though I was assured that the distress and terror throughout the island were very great. There were several French warships here, of the extraordinary shapes that French naval architects have developed during the last two or three decades, looking almost like bogies intended to scare by their horrible appearance as much as by any offensive powers they might have. This was especially the case with the guardship, a huge black mass with irregularly placed funnels and a general air of being a piece of some mighty shore battery that had in some unexplainable way broken adrift from its base and floated out here. The other French warships were not so hideous, but still did not at all commend themselves to a seaman's eye as being desirable craft to be at sea in, much less to fight in, but the interest of the place to the average tourist lies not in the harbour at all. He is generally quite anxious to get ashore, and not prone to admire or criticize, supposing he be given that way, the accommodation the port affords for ships. Thus it is that the really splendid harbour of Fort de France rarely meets with the appreciation which it deserves at the hands of tourists.

On landing, one is struck with the neat and

military appearance of the place, which, indeed, is characteristic of most French colonies, the public thoroughfares and buildings receiving that careful attention which makes travelling so pleasant. It is all the more noticeable, too, by comparison with the ex-Spanish and Portuguese colonies, where one finds the worst roads that civilization has to show. In fact, in the matter of public highways, I should place the French first, the British next, the Germans next, and Americans, Spanish, and Portuguese last, Italians, perhaps, earning a place before the last three.

Martinique has a reputation among Napoleon worshippers as being the birthplace of the Empress Josephine, and her statue stands in an open space at Fort de France, which is the favourite evening rendezvous of the inhabitants. But now all other considerations of the beauty, salubrity, and fertility of the island fade before its unenviable notoriety as the scene of the awful disaster of St. Pierre, a visitation which has brought to Martinique the sympathies and condolences of the whole civilized world. So great has been the curiosity of travellers to visit the scene of so awful a catastrophe, that before the terrible mountain had ceased its manifestations of destructive power, there were crowds of eager visitors, many of whom had narrow escapes for their lives during successive minor eruptions. But as our stay here on the northward journey was limited to two hours, there

was no opportunity afforded for travelling to the scene of the disaster by land, except for those who were making a stay in the island. At 4 p.m. we were on our way northward again, our next port of call being Roseau, in Dominica. We ran along close in shore, the weather being beautiful but somewhat misty over the high land of the island, and presently we came within view of the sombre mountain and the victim of its fury. I have seen the ruins of Pompeii, and also the place where Anjer was after the tremendous outburst of Krakatoa, but neither of those remains interested or impressed me as did the ruins of St. Pierre. At first it looked like the plan of a town that was being built all at once. Long rows of apparently unfinished buildings, with their necessary piles of débris adjacent, and none of them more than half or a quarter way towards completion. But as we drew nearer, the true character of that great unfinished town revealed itself. Those long rows of roofless houses and dismantled churches showed up as what they really were, and it needed but little exercise of the imagination to picture the horrors of the time when that death-bearing cloud of poisonous gases and superheated dust settled down upon the busy thoroughfares. The mind recoiled from the knowledge of all those many thousands being thus suddenly called from life to death, young and old, sick and hale, good and evil, in prayer or debauchery, one common,

sudden end engulfed them all. But the terrible irony of the whole happening seems to me to lie in the fact that of all that crowd of 30,000 people, the only survivor should be a negro lying in a prison cell under sentence of death. Surely there never was a stranger selection than that by the elements! I have never heard that there was any question of his guilt, only that being released he went scot free and made a handsome sum lecturing—save the mark!—on his experiences.

The summit of Mont Pelée, where a cone had risen out of the crater, was all reeking with smoke, not at all to be confounded with the mist that rose from or hung about other eminences around. Down the scored and gashed sides of the mountain the streams of lava had run, and were now congealed into all fantastic shapes imaginable, while here and there between them kindly Nature had commenced to clothe their ghastliness with all tender shades of green. At one portion of the foot plateau I noticed what had evidently been a large church, perhaps a cathedral, with nothing visible of its shape but the towers emerging from a formless heap of ashes, into the side of which there penetrated a wide and high opening, looking just like a cavern in the side of a hill. But of all the scenes visible from our decks as we glided by, none impressed me more than that presented by a little promontory between two lava streams, and having deep crevices



on either side. There were two or three houses upon it, and it was clothed in verdure dotted with fine trees, its area being, at a guess, some six or eight acres. Above, below, and on either side, everything had been blasted by the poisonous breath and overwhelming shower of ashes from the volcano. But this green spot looked as if the angel of destruction, having received his commission to spare it, had covered it with his hand, and preserved it from the doom that had overspread the whole surrounding country.

In spite of the desolate horror of this blasted coast there was a dread fascination about it which kept all eyes on board fixed upon it as long as anything was discernible. But once we had steamed out of view, there was a sigh of relief, and a sense that, great as the calamity had undoubtedly been, the area devastated was comparatively small, and that the survivors would, once the terrors of that period had been dulled by the soothing hand of time, rise to the occasion, and, making the most of their opportunities, again build and plant and reap, and enjoy as before. For the rest of the coast of Martinique looked so beautiful, so pregnant with possibilities of prosperity, that it was impossible to regard it as likely to be abandoned to its primitive and natural conditions again.

Our next objective was Roseau, in the beautiful island of Dominica—the bold outlines of which were visible before we left the shelter of the shores of

Martinique. And as we steamed at full speed northward I could not help trying to construct a mental view of the stupendous plateau beneath our keel from which this great group of islands rises, in some cases almost sheer from a depth of 20,000 feet. For it should be remembered that, with the exceptions of a small area in the South Pacific from which rise the solitary group of the Kermadecs, where the greatest depth of the ocean has been found 30,930 feet, and another patch off the coast of Japan extending northward along the Kurile Islands, this part of the ocean furnishes the greatest depths known. Indeed, in one spot, quite close to Puerto Plata in Hayti, a depth of 27,366 feet has been plumbed accurately. Of course, the chain of the Antilles does not rise sheer from so profound a depth as that, for it is the maximum depth, as far as is known, of the whole Atlantic, but depths of 10,000 to 13,000 feet close in shore are quite common. One tries vainly to picture the scene from the bed of the Atlantic, were it drained, of that gigantic mountain range, not approached by gradual ascent, but springing almost sheer from the

> "Great grey level plains of ooze,
> Where the shell-burred cables creep."

In consequence of this configuration of the land, it is necessary to approach so nearly to the shore at Roseau that any one with a tolerably good pair of eyes can recognize persons on shore without the aid of glasses

before one dares to let go an anchor. And even then there is great risk, for the bottom slopes seaward so perpendicularly that I found less than 120 feet at the bow of the ship, and more than 360 feet at the stern—a distance of less than 300 feet apart. Of course, the Company's ships seldom have to anchor, mooring-buoys being laid down for them in nearly every port, but in such a place as Roseau these buoys are continually liable to get adrift and be lost. In which case there is quite a test of the captain's powers when arriving on a pitchy night, tied to time, and with a perfect tangle of currents running. But, of course, passengers cannot be expected to think of or appreciate that.

We arrived at Roseau at dusk, and, as usual on the upward passage, our stay was very short, so I did not attempt to land, and contented myself with trying for fish, as it was about the time when my old experience reminded me that fish were most easily deceived. My luck was out, however, or the water was too deep, for never a sign of a fish did I see. Indeed, I had hardly got well started before the warning-bell sounded, our mail-boat having returned, and we were off for Guadaloupe. I stood on deck until the night hid the last vestige of the island from my view, in the vain attempt to distinguish the pretty little bay of Prince Rupert, wherein I had crept twenty-two years before on a curious errand. I had been kindly given a passage

to Antigua, where I had left the little schooner I had navigated thither from Novia Scotia, by the skipper of a little Barbadian schooner, who was desperately ill with that scourge of the tropics—dysentery. We had a number of horses on deck, which we were taking to Barbados, and, owing to light and contrary winds, had been so delayed that by the time we were off Dominica all their forage was exhausted. It was imperative that some food should be obtained for them, so we stood in for the nearest port, which happened to be Prince Rupert Bay. We reached the anchorage, and went ashore, finding that a sufficiency of the green tops of the sugar-cane was easily available, and in a very short time we had accumulated a large quantity of what I suppose was to the poor beasts perfectly delicious food. I remembered, too, very vividly, how I had been struck with the extraordinary *patois* of the negroes—a combination of the strangest French and English surely that ever was heard. But I could not see Prince Rupert at all now, so I obeyed the call to dinner.

XII

AMONG THE NORTHERN ISLANDS

I FEEL keenly that there is a possibility of my being asked why it is that I do not devote more space to a description of the islands themselves, instead of confining myself, as I have done, to the passage itself. But I hope it will be noted that I could not attempt, under the circumstances, to supplement what has already been said, and well said, in various guide-books on the subject, on this swift passing from one island to another, carrying his Majesty's mails. Of course it would be easy to read up those same guide-books and fill page after page with observations deduced from their information, but I do not think that would be fair, or even honest. On the way back I hope to note more than I have hitherto been able to do of these beautiful islands, but on our rush to the north it is impossible. Take, for instance, the present juncture. Our jovial skipper asked me banteringly, as I bade him good night, whether I wished to be called, on the ship's arrival at Guadeloupe, at about 2 a.m. I begged



Going Ashore.



to be excused, telling him that if I could successfully resist the arousing powers of the steam-winches and the signal-cannon over my head, I should feel highly delighted; but that I feared very much that, whether I would or no, I should be awakened to witness the arrival and the departure of a mail steamer in and from a foreign port in the small hours of the morning. I have, however, to record the (to me) amazing fact that neither the explosion of the cannon or any other noise did arouse me from the sweet and dreamless sleep into which I fell almost immediately upon entering my bunk—me who had only recently been a victim of insomnia! Surely there never was such a climate for inducing sleep as that of the West Indies, for several of my fellow-passengers whom I greeted in the morning were, like myself, in entire ignorance of our arrival and departure at Guadeloupe.

At daybreak (about 5.30) the early risers were in time to witness our arrival at the pretty little island of Montserrat, one of the healthiest of all the islands, and one, I should say, which would well repay a few days' visit. Steaming into the roadstead of Plymouth, as we did in the first freshness of daybreak, one gets a really pleasant idea of the beauty of a place like this. Here can be found much of the picturesque charm attaching to the South Sea Islands, with very few of the inevitable inconveniences attaching to those far-away gems of the Pacific. One enterprising

firm has made this little ocean oasis familiar to an enormous number of our incurious people at home by reason of their attaching its name to their lime-juice, so that Montserrat lime-juice is a household word to people who have not the remotest idea where the place is or what it is. But I was somewhat grieved to hear that, owing in great measure to the failure of the crop in Montserrat, the source of supply had shifted to other islands, notably Dominica. Not that I begrudged them one item of their prosperity, but I did not like to hear of brave little Montserrat being stranded by reason of the failure of her principal industry. For really, in such a small spot as this—think of it, only forty-two square miles!—any failure of a means of income must fall terribly heavy upon the inhabitants, since there is so little room for readjustment. So that I sympathize most sincerely with Montserrat, much as I long to see all our West Indian possessions highly prosperous. Here, again, our stay was of necessity short, so I contented myself for the hour and a half by feasting my eyes on the natural beauties of the place, and thinking what an ideal home might be made there by any one with a small but certain income who was weary of the stress of civilization.

Off again before breakfast, and this time bound for Antigua, another of my old haunts. It was here that I first realized the enormous waste of wealth that

went on every day out here. Of course, as a seaman, I knew the economic value of lime-juice, and had noted that it was coming into favour ashore as a really delicious beverage, and therefore I felt really grieved to see heaps of this beautiful fruit lying along the roads rotting, while the trees above my head were bending beneath their burden. May I here make a short digression? Every sailor knows that in a British ship, after the crew have been a statutory number of days upon salt provisions, the law is that each man shall receive at midday a good drink of lime-juice mixed with water and sugar, as a prophylactic against scurvy. Now, this drink is delicious, and I never yet met a man that did not like it and realize the benefit of having a gratis drink, fresh and palatable, in the middle of the day, especially when his allowance of water for all purposes was strictly limited to three quarts per diem. Yet in an English magazine of high class, after I had left the sea, I read (in their science columns) this choice information: "There is good news for sailors. Every captain knows how hard it is to make his men comply with the law, and take the nasty bitter lime-juice specified by the Board of Trade. Mr. So-and-So has invented a biscuit wherein the essential principle of lime-juice is present but tasteless;" and so on. Now, this is entirely on a par with the general ignorance of maritime affairs manifested in the press of this



country. I know that what we call "Whitewashed Yanks" sneer at British ships as "lime-juicers," but *nota bene*, I never knew one of them that did not always take his tot of lime-juice at eight bells, and a shipmate's too, if he could get it. It is one of the very few luxuries in a sailing-ship on a long voyage.

As we drew nearer the harbour of St. John, I realized with something like awe how wonderful are the workings of the human memory. For the last time I had seen this place was twenty-four years ago, and that was also the first time. It was in the schooner of which I spoke in the last chapter. On the huge stretch from Cape Sable to the south we had no chronometer, and it was not possible to work a lunar distance, so I ran south on a meridian until in the parallel of Antigua, and then steered west, not without some dread of running upon Barbuda, which is only, at its highest point, a few feet above water-mark. Then, as luck would have it, we spoke the British barque *Cymbeline*, homeward bound, and he gave us our longitude by the primitive method of chalking it on a board and holding it up. Thus fortified, we bowled along merrily before a strong Trade, holding about E.N.E., for two days, when I shinned up the fore topmast, and discovered, like another Christopher Columbus, Antigua, well to leeward. I hailed the skipper gleefully (I have before mentioned that I was engaged to navigate, he being only a coasting man)

to keep her away three points, for the port of our desire was on our lee bow. But my employer had many doubts, and could not at all share my confidence in the certainty of our position, and I had a difficult task to persuade him that we really had arrived in so good a bearing for running into our port. However, he yielded at last, and almost before the wind we ran into St. John's and anchored, our really perilous winter passage in that tiny craft (she was only twenty-four tons) safely over.

And now, under such very different circumstances, I recognized the contour of the land about the harbour immediately as we steamed in stately fashion to the outer anchorage. Here, although our stay was but two hours in duration, there was much more work to be done, for we had a considerable quantity of cargo to discharge, and there were many visitors. Most of our passengers went off in the agent's steam-launch for a run ashore, being certain of not losing their passage if only they were in time for the launch's coming off again. As usual, I contented myself with fishing and admiring the scenery—here so different to that of the mountainous islands we had lately been visiting. The coast of Antigua has well been compared to that of the south of England, although perhaps scarcely as rugged, take it altogether, and it is certainly a splendid place to spend a holiday for a fugitive from the rigours of an English winter. It is one of the oldest of our

English possessions in the Antilles, having been ours since 1666, or about a century and half after its discovery by Columbus. Again that warning-bell and the bustle of departure, the curio-sellers, boys and women, hanging on till the last minute; then the rattle of the windlass, the grumble of the screw, and we were off on our travels once more, now bound for Nevis, the little dot on the chart only 50 square miles in area, with 16,000 cultivable acres, where the negroes speak a quaint Irish dialect derived from Irish prisoners deported by the scourge of the Green Isle—Cromwell. It is evidently just a volcano heaved up from the great plateau beneath, for it has enormous deposits of sulphur in an almost pure state, and its hot springs are of such a high medicinal value that I wonder greatly that they have not long ago been exploited commercially. But, though so tiny, Nevis has a great hold upon history. It seems to have had a magnetic attraction for refugees during the civil war in England, and must at one time have been almost densely populated. It has also a romantic interest as having been the place where Lord Nelson found his wife and married her, and for that reason, if for none other, should be visited by those who hold the name of the great admiral in almost superstitious reverence.

But little Nevis has also a more solemn claim upon our interest, as having been, fourteen years after the English occupation, the scene of one of those awful

visitations to which volcanic islands are peculiarly subject. For the infant capital, Jamestown, was then submerged by an earthquake. It was engulfed by the waves, and not a trace of it remained to show where it had been. Indeed, it seems to have been the sport of evil fortune, for it is on record that in 1710 the French devastated the island, and following upon their invasion came a hurricane, earthquake, and drought. But even that was not enough to damp the ardour of colonists who were attracted to this spot of earth. They swarmed here again, only to be visited, twenty-seven years later, by an extraordinary atmospheric phenomenon, more disastrous in its effects than any of the island's previous calamities. In 1737 there came what, for want of a better term, has been called a "blight." Probably it was a series of poisonous exhalations from the central cone of the old volcano; but, whatever it was, it destroyed all vegetation, and thus reduced the fertile spot to a desert wherein nothing could live. A compulsory exodus of all the inhabitants ensued. They fled to the North American colonies, and no doubt contributed largely to the upbuilding of the great republic. So Nevis was left desolate.

There is no direct record of its re-colonization, but no doubt, left to itself, it soon recovered its former fertility, and probably many of its former colonists ventured back again, so great is the attraction that places have for those who have grown to look upon

them as home. If I may say so without offending any of its devoted children, it is at present a most insignificant item in the great British Empire, but enjoys, through the liberality of our postal authorities, as regular a communication with the centres of civilization as any of its larger and important sisters. It also enjoys an immunity from the desires of the United States for annexation, being perhaps beneath their notice, or perhaps being only regarded as an item in the great sum of all the West Indies which the Great Republic fully expects to bring under the ægis of its flag in the not very distant future. Only eleven miles separate Charlestown, Nevis, from Basse-Terre, St. Kitts, or St. Christopher, and consequently there is a fairly constant and busy intercourse between the two islands, for, owing to the fine weather and steady breezes obtaining most of the year, the navigation is easy even for small boats, and a visitor spending a short holiday at either island would soon, if he had a taste for the delightful pastime of boat-sailing (I will not dignify it by the name of yachting), get quite in the habit of taking a trip between them. Our crossing (after a stay at Nevis of half an hour) occupied only an hour, when we came to anchor in the pretty roadstead of St. Christopher.

I used the longer form of its name in order to point out that with the modesty common to most really great men, Columbus chose one of the smallest

islands of his amazing discovery to bear his name, and even then he shifted the honour to his patron saint. It was discovered by him on his second voyage in 1493, and its history since then has been fairly uneventful for so much disputed a place as the West Indies is both by man and the elements. There is a volcano, still smouldering, into the crater of which one may descend if they are fairly active, and there is also a huge hill called Brimstone Hill, which looks as if it had been once the summit of the mountain and had been flung by an eruption to the place where it now lies. But if that be true, it must have happened before the written history of the West Indies began, for there is no record of so stupendous an event as that must have been. Upon that world-fragment there are the remains of huge fortifications (fancy spending all that money and labour and life in the defence of so tiny a spot at that distance from the mother country!), and it was long looked upon as impregnable—the Gibraltar of the West Indies. Yet it was the key of no position; it defended no harbour, for Basse-Terre is a roadstead, and might very well have been left severely alone by any hostile fleet as being of not the slightest consequence which side it belonged to. So too, as I omitted to notice in my remarks upon Dominica, was Prince Rupert fortified, a place hardly worthy of being dignified with the name of a harbour, and certainly of not the slightest

use to anybody. It would be interesting to note the reception in Parliament of any proposal to spend public money upon such works as these now, when even such necessary works as the barracks at St. Lucia have been stopped. But this is verging on the political, and I must refrain. We made a rather longer stay at Basse-Terre than there was any need for, because our next port was St. Thomas, and we were just as well at anchor quietly as proceeding very slowly for St. Thomas, at which place we did not wish to arrive before dawn on the following day. So the swift tropical sunset came, and the delicious night descended softly upon us as we lay all silently at our anchor and felt as if we had been here for years. There were plenty of fish, but I was not well equipped for catching them, at any rate, I caught none. Instead I lay lazily upon the wheel grating aft and listened to the enthusiastic remarks of a native about the pleasures of living in St. Kitts. He was certainly a living advertisement for the place, if you did not sit down in cold blood and analyze his panegyrics, as I did, finding that his *sport* was mainly confined to shooting *monkeys!* Until then I had hardly thought of the possibility of monkeys being native to any of the smaller Antilles, although, of course, I know of the strange manner in which they haunt certain isolated spots, such as the rock of Gibraltar, in defiance of any probabilities. As my friend enlarged upon the joys

and excitements of the chase, I ventured to ask whether it was not cruel sport, and withal one from which no possible profit could be extracted. He immediately launched into a most voluble defence of his favourite amusement, as indeed I expected he would. He said that the monkey was a pest, a creature that ravaged the growing crops of the planter and labourer alike, and for every dollar's-worth he ate he destroyed ten dollars'-worth. Also he told me that, although personally he did not care for cooked monkey as a diet, the negro plantation hand did, enjoying the strange meat very much, so that his return from a hunting expedition with several defunct monkeys was always hailed with exuberant joy by the labourers, who forthwith held a feast. At this explanation I professed myself fully satisfied, and we parted the very best of friends.

The breeze had fallen to nearly a calm and the sky was cloudless when that clamorous bell of ours gave its warning to all who had lingered on board until the last moment, not intending to quit their ocean home, that they must leave at once. The noisy windlass clattered and banged as the massive anchor rose reluctantly from its weedy bed, the strident sounds echoing among the heights of the quiet isle. Then the propeller churned up the placid depths, and the ejection pump flung its scalding contribution into the inscrutable waves, much to the terrible dismay

of the fish, who darted away in every direction, leaving the water seamed behind them with streaks of emerald light.

The rest of that night, as far as I am concerned, was a comfortable blank. For although I yield to no one in my intense interest in all that goes on during such a voyage as this by night as well as by day, I had made the pleasant discovery that my ability to sleep had returned to me, and I could rest better than I had done for many years. I have not been a victim to acute insomnia, but I gradually grew to want less and less sleep, until I felt grateful if I could get four hours' steady and uninterrupted slumber. Therefore I was overjoyed to find that, in spite of the many excitements and distractions of this beautiful trip, I could go to my bunk at 10 p.m., drop asleep almost immediately, and know no more until 6 a.m., when I felt as if my life had been renewed. Perhaps the reader may smile at my laying stress upon this, but if he had known the misery, as I have for many years, of awakening in the morning feeling far more weary than when he lay down, and had been obliged at once to plunge into severe toil, racked at the same time with a fearful cough, he would understand and sympathize.

At dawn in the morning I rose to find the *Eden* steaming slowly into the safe and compact harbour of St. Thomas, and my admiration of the exceedingly

pretty little town of Charlotte Amalie was great. It has a most picturesque appearance from the sea, being distributed almost equally over the flanks of three equidistant hills. As the morning sun rose higher the clean red and white of the houses shone forth with a curious air of newness against the dark green foliage in which they were embowered, and as a typical instance of the order and neatness of the Danish authorities, even the very rocks upon a reef which lay in the fairway were whitewashed so as to make them more conspicuous upon a dark night for any vessel making the harbour.

But I confess to a feeling of annoyance at the sight of a huge board erected upon posts sunk into the hillside on the port hand, bearing in letters about two feet long, "H. Michelsen's Bay Rum." And I thought with regret of the action of the Swiss authorities, who compelled an enterprising Yankee advertiser, who had blazoned the name of the nostrum he was selling upon the face of a cliff, to efface it forthwith, pay a heavy fine, and then quit the country. I am a firm believer in advertising, but not in defacing a beautiful landscape with it, and that board on the foreshore of St. Thomas's harbour is an outrage which the Danish folk should not tolerate.

There were but few vessels in the harbour. One was a steam-collier, discharging her grimy cargo at the Hamburg-American Steamship Company's wharf;

one was the Royal Mail Company's smart little steamer *Spey*, which trades around the islands to places too small for the mail and inter-island ships to touch at; and four others were sailing-vessels in the last stages of distress, having fetched in here as a well-known harbour of refuge for such weather-beaten craft. One was French, and the others were Scandinavian, but none of them looked as if they would ever go to sea any more. Then I learned that, in days not so long passed away, St. Thomas was the goal for all such craft as this and the despair of underwriters. For it was said that once a ship put in here in distress, her chances of ever getting away again were very scanty. It is said that there existed a ring which embraced all the agents of shipping and surveyors and shipbreakers, with which the place swarmed. Also that they were empowered to hold such inquiries as were necessary, and to condemn any vessel that they did not deem fit to go to sea again, unless, indeed, more money was to be made out of selling to her such necessary equipment as was stored there from other vessels which had been broken up. Of course it did not require a very keen intelligence to see how immensely profitable such a business could be made for those engaged in it, if they all worked amicably together and divided the plunder according to rules in that case made and provided. I must repeat that this is only what I have heard, and it may be a gross libel

upon a set of good Samaritans who, in this remote corner of the world, did their best for such unfortunate members of the shipping community as were compelled to have their ships judged there and condemned or repaired as the case might be.

As this was the final port of the northern tour, and the mail contract specified a certain date for return, we were to lie for five days idle. For, with the exception of coaling, which is always done during this stay from the Company's depôt, and such overhauling of ship and engines as is necessary, there is nothing to do. St. Thomas has practically no trade whatever, its importance being solely that of a handy port of call for steamers and a principal station of the West Indian Direct Cable Company, whose genial superintendent here has a most happy faculty of making visitors feel very much at home either at his office or his beautiful house on one of the hills. So that here the officers of the *Eden* were able to obtain a little rest, which they sorely needed, as from the time we left Barbados, northward bound, they had been on the go nearly all the time. It is no sinecure any officer's post in the West Indian station boats. But here in St. Thomas there were compensations, and very pleasant society, as tourists in the season always find, and although the island itself is very small, and the sights may easily be exhausted in a couple of days, the time need never hang heavy on any one's hands.

In the tourist season the steamer runs over to Porto Rico, which is reached in a few hours, and it is possible to make a brief examination into the changes which have taken place since the transfer of Porto Rico from Spanish to American rule. And that brings me to the failure of the deal engineered by a few astute Americans to bring St. Thomas, St. Croix, and Eustatius under United States rule. A great wave of popular enthusiasm arose in Denmark, which the American agents in Danish islands were quite unable to stem, and the proposal fell entirely through.

But I have often thought that, in the event of a European war, there would be many grave international complications certainly arising out here, owing to the fact that the lesser islands belong to so many different nations. When a tiny island like St. Martins is divided between French and Dutch, Anegada, Virgin Gorda, and Tortola are British, St. Bartholomew is French, Saba is Dutch, and Eustatius is Danish (I am only mentioning the tiniest of these scattered islets), it will easily be seen that here are all the elements of a great international quarrel, if two great Powers like Britain and France or Germany were at loggerheads. Personally, I think it would be better if all these small spots as far south as Antigua were under the Stars and Stripes.

XIII

ST. THOMAS AND SOUTH AGAIN

THE observant traveller who lands in St. Thomas after having visited all our West Indian possessions receives a severe shock. For he has now found a town that, while it has evidently no imports or exports worth mentioning, looks fairly comfortable and well-to-do. Though drink is ridiculously cheap, owing to the absence of import duties, I saw no drunkenness at all, no rowdyism of any kind. Also the negro here is as courteous and polite as he is very much the reverse in our possessions. Again and again I have seen white ladies and gentlemen elbowed off the side walk in both Kingston and Bridgetown by negro men and women, and I have heard outspoken remarks made upon the visitors that were exceedingly unpleasant to listen to. But in St. Thomas there is nothing of that sort as far as I could see or my inquiries could ascertain. The negro man and woman are polite in the extreme, and that apparently from choice, and not at all from necessity. Also the behaviour of the

hackmen and boatmen is so civil, and not at all importunate, that it contrasts most strikingly with the behaviour of the same class in Barbados and Jamaica. The boatmen are not allowed to crowd the landing-place, only three boats at a time being permitted to remain there, and they may not assail a probable passenger with a hurricane of importunate cries. Nor can they well overcharge, since the table of fares is boldly printed on a board in a conspicuous place. Moreover, there are many policemen, who really do keep strict order. The hackmen try to arrest the passengers' attention by a gentle hiss, nothing further. But what appealed to me most was the perfect courtesy and kindly interest manifested by all the negro population towards the whites, and yet there did not seem to me to be the element of fear present, which was very curious. Everybody spoke English, and spoke it well; but that one speedily gets accustomed to in ports abroad, where, no matter what the flag may be, English appears to be the universal medium of communication.

The Danish folk in St. Thomas speak English as if it were their mother tongue, and I have no doubt German as well, since St. Thomas is the principal port of call for the Hamburg-American Steamship Company in the West Indies. And this brings me to one of the most extraordinary shipping problems I have ever been confronted with. Day after day, with the utmost

regularity, these splendid steamers of the great German line call here (for they *are* splendid vessels, up-to-date in every particular, the model of what the best type of cargo-carrier should be), with never an ounce of cargo to deliver or to take away. Neither have they any cargo worth speaking of for other ports —I saw seven of these fine vessels arrive in five days, and they were all flying light. And I was told that there is on an average one calling on every day of the year, and as far as any earnings are concerned, there might as well be none. True, it is the Company's coaling-station, but only one in seven of the ships coals there. Now, the puzzle is, how can such a trade pay? Judging from the published accounts of the company, the Government subsidy is quite trifling in amount, certainly not one quarter enough to pay the running expenses of such a fleet. Of course I know that the ships go from St. Thomas to several ports in Hayti and on the Spanish Main, anywhere, in fact, where cargo of any kind, in however small a quantity, is to be picked up, but even upon the most liberal estimates the freight to be earned is a mere trifle compared with the expense of working so large a number of huge ships. I have discussed this matter with a number of well-informed people connected with shipping, and apparently the only possible solution of the mystery is that the Hamburg-American Company is supported by immense secret Government subsidies,

the amount of which is never made public. And if this be true, such a proceeding can have but one object—the destruction of British trade in this part of the world, since the whole of the rest of the shipping trade out here is negligible in quantity, with the exception of the American fruit business. Of course, we have all long known how immense are the efforts of Germany, backed by the Emperor, to win a foremost position in the carrying trade of the world by whatever means can be employed, but I do not think that British folk realize how persistent and unscrupulous those efforts are, or what their object—I mean their ultimate object—is. The fact is that our rulers do not at all realize the dangers which lie all around the British Mercantile Marine, but I feel perfectly sure that if only Germany's exchequer holds out, and we maintain our present careless attitude, it will be but a very short time before British trade with the West Indies, as far as shipping is concerned, is a thing of the past.

But it may be said, "What about the Royal Mail Company? Does not that run its ships to these islands at a loss?" My answer is yes, to the shame of our Government and shippers, who receive all the benefits accruing to them from a regular and properly conducted mail service. But there is really no comparison between the German company and the English one. Let me repeat that during five days while the *Eden*

lay at St. Thomas earning nothing and at heavy expense in order to fulfil a mail contract, the subsidy for which is less than half what it honestly should be, there were seven German ships in and out of the port, each of which was three times larger than the *Eden*. If our Government, knowing all the facts, deliberately choose to allow such a purely British company as the Royal Mail to be starved out by the Germans, and should then allow the German ships to step in and do all the trade of the islands, as they surely would, I suppose there is no help for it, but the retribution awaiting such an act of suicidal folly would be sure and swift. It may be said that I speak strongly and bitterly, but my only regret is my inability to be as forceful in my remarks as the circumstances demand. I am certain of one thing, and that is that to the intense delight of all our foreign competitors there seems to be a conspiracy on the part of our rulers to hand over without question everything that we have in the way of trade to the foreigner, and to reply to all such protests as mine that it is solely because the British trader, be he shipowner or merchant, is not capable of doing the business as it should be done. Which is, to put it plainly and truthfully, a libel and a lie. As well blame a man for drowning who is in the sea with hands and feet tied. I sadly fear that the British public will awaken to the facts of the treatment of the British Mercantile Marine when it is

too late to save it from destruction. And then? Well, without the British Mercantile Marine, Britain as a nation must cease to exist. It is the veriest folly to clamour for a strong and efficient Navy when the trade which it is the Navy's chief business to protect is no longer there to be protected. And that it is passing away from us, at an ever-increasing rate, everybody engaged in it knows only too well.

I make no apology whatever for writing thus, for I love my country, and feel that to neglect saying what I know as forcefully as I can say it, would be as shameful as is the behaviour of those in high places who wilfully blind themselves to what is going on all over the world to-day. But having said my say, I will now return to the matter I have in hand. The visitor to St. Thomas need not feel the stay there, small as the island is, one hour too long. The genial courtesy of the inhabitants and the pleasant surroundings are exceedingly enjoyable. Fishing and boating come in easily after the shore pleasures are exhausted, and one of the lions of the place, Krum Bay, affords an objective for a day's excursion that should on no account be missed. It can be reached overland, but the sail there from the harbour is an exceedingly pleasant one, and is, if the weather be what it usually is, a part of the day's enjoyment which it would be quite a mistake to neglect. Here are to be found the remains of many a noble ship, the *disjecta membra* of

vessels which have been condemned and broken up. There is on every hand some specimen of old marine architecture, notably an avenue of quaint figure-heads in every imaginable variety of eager pose, glassy stare, and queer colours. There is a house of several rooms whose every detail has been borrowed from ships, walls, roofs, floors, furniture, and ornaments. The owner of these premises and the adjacent grounds, littered with everything that has ever formed part of a ship, is as full of pride in their possession, and is as pleased to show them, as if instead of having lived this Robinson Crusoe sort of life for a quarter of a century, he had only just arrived. But he cannot help lamenting the "good old days" when St. Thomas was *the* place for worn-out ships to make for, be condemned, and broken up. Still he makes an admirable cicerone, and there are few pleasanter places for a picnic. In the clear waters of the bay there is excellent fishing, and away from the shore a little, where there is no danger of putting the feet down upon the terrible spines of the sea-eggs (*echinus*), there is ideal bathing.

One peculiarity of St. Thomas I noticed was the number of Haytian refugees there. The republic, where black rules white, is, as most people know, in a chronic state of rebellion, if that can be called rebellion where the power ruling at any given time is distinctly anarchical, not from choice, but from incompetence. These coloured generals, premiers,



treasurers, etc., swagger about, all well-to-do and comfortable-looking, awaiting the time when another turn of the Haytian kaleidoscope shall bring them in touch with the spoils of office again. I fell in here with a gentleman of great ability, a townsman of my own who, to my intense amazement, with the object-lesson of Hayti ever before his eyes, was an enthusiastic pro-negro. Argument with him was impossible. To him the negro was the incarnation of all the virtues bound in ebony, and if the coloured race had any faults, they were in his belief entirely derived from its contact with the whites. Given time, he said the negro would show the world a pattern of good government, honesty, and energy such as it had never yet seen. And as he suffered from almost total deafness, one had to listen to his extraordinary theories without a chance of reply, even if one could feel that any reply would be listened to. It was most amusing, yet withal quite sad, to see how so intelligent a man could thus deliberately blind himself to the most self-evident facts.

However, I have not—thank Heaven!—to discuss the negro question here, and gladly pass on. The unpleasant task of coaling had to be undertaken, and for that purpose the *Eden* was hauled alongside the Company's coal wharf, where a crowd of women, mixed with a few men, commenced their arduous task of carrying the dirty but essential stuff from the stored

mounds along the foreshore and pier to the ship's bunkers. They toiled like ants, for they were paid according to the number of baskets carried—one cent each—and I was informed that they could earn fairly good money. They certainly did earn it, whatever it was, for the baskets contained about half a hundredweight each, and were poised on the head. I did not stay long to witness their labour, for the wind was off shore, and the ship soon became overlaid, even in her most secret recesses, with a thick deposit of coal-dust. And there were so many pleasant things to do ashore that it was folly to stay on board when I could escape. Like almost every visitor, I purchased a supply of bay rum and cigars, both of which luxuries are astoundingly cheap. A quart bottle of bay rum can be purchased for one shilling, and, remembering the price demanded for a quarter-of-a-pint bottle in our hair-dressers' shops at home, I saw for the first time how great were the profits made upon this pleasant adjunct to the toilet. I do not for one moment believe that it has all the medicinal properties claimed for it on the bottles, but it is certainly very refreshing for toilet use, especially in hot weather, and its low price causes it to be rather extensively used out here.

Our pleasant stay at this pretty island drew near its close, and the time had passed so rapidly that I felt quite loth to leave. But the hour arrived—6 p.m. on the 31st of May—and, with just a handful of passengers

and the mails on board, we weighed and departed for St. Kitts again. But we had apparently bidden farewell to fine weather, the Trades being exceedingly strong, and the ship's motion quite unpleasant to those who by their long residence ashore had almost forgotten what a sea passage was like. Even I was not at all sorry to find the ship again under the lee of the land, as I did upon coming on deck at dawn. As the stay was limited to one hour, I did not attempt to land, but contented myself with viewing the island and the pretty town through a pair of very powerful glasses. After shipment of a little cargo and about half a dozen passengers, not forgetting the tiny mail, we weighed for Nevis, where we arrived in about an hour. I felt strongly tempted to go ashore here, but, realizing how short the time was, I refrained for the same reasons as I have before given, although the courteous agent of the Royal Mail Company gave me a most pressing invitation to do so. Instead, I loafed delightfully, watching the busy scene and indolently toying with a fishing-line, but no one should expect to catch any fish in such places as this during the heat of the day. After one strenuous hour we were under weigh again, bound for Antigua, and I promised myself I would revisit St. John's, as I knew we should have several hours to spare there. But I am almost ashamed to say that the weather and the lively ship combined to assist a sudden attack of indigestion, so that when

we reached St. John's at 4.30 I felt that my remembrances of the town were quite vivid enough to serve me in lieu of going ashore, although I was earnestly pressed to do so.

Instead, I passed the time most pleasantly watching the busy scene alongside, where the strong, substantial lighters, loaded with pine-apples in frails and barrels of lime-juice, were tumbling about as their sweetly-smelling freight was whipped out of them, or the agility of the negro sailors who handled these clumsy craft in the strong wind that was blowing, bringing them alongside, and departing again without damage, although, owing to the crowd of them that were there, it seemed an almost impossible feat. But the visiting boats gave me most amusement. They were mostly engaged in carrying the curio-sellers, and these ladies were so voluble, so utterly and absurdly unreasonable in their abuse of their boatmen, and withal so utterly unintelligible to me, that I found it, as the common phrase goes, as good as a play to watch and to listen to them. Fortunately, passengers do not have to depend upon this means of transport to and from the shore, the commodious steam-launch of the agent being at their service all the time. Otherwise, I fear there would be many complaints, for the native boatman is certainly one of the most inexpert of his kind to be found anywhere.

A goodly quantity of cargo was shipped here and

several passengers, much to my relief, for I was beginning to wonder however it could be possible to run such fine ships as these on a route where there was so little return for the enterprise. We left at 9.30 for Montserrat, and almost at once plunged into our old friend's boisterous embraces, the N.E. Trade. He was certainly out to-night, and gave us a rare taste of his quality, making me thankful that, instead of having to stand on the "high and lofty bridge persecuting my vocation," as a seaman, I could go below and leave it to the other fellow. Yet I admit I felt cowardly, and as if I were shirking, and could only quiet my conscience by repeatedly calling up from memory the time when I used to spend the strenuous hours of the night in much the same kind of way. Then I went to sleep, and heard nothing at all of our arrival at or departure from Montserrat.

I came on deck at daybreak greeted with lovely weather and the beautiful shores of Guadeloupe, which the ship had touched at on the upward passage while I was asleep. Of course I had seen the beautiful island before, but not near enough to distinguish any details, and as I had heard many warm and admiring things said about it, I was exceedingly glad to have such an opportunity as this of making its close acquaintance. There are few travelling pleasures with which I am acquainted that are more enjoyable than that of leaning over the rail of a fine ship coming

alongside a lovely and unfamiliar coast into a beautiful harbour in the first freshness of the dawn. Apart altogether from that curious feeling of complacency common to most of us when we rise very early, not being obliged so to do, there is a sense of virtue being abundantly rewarded by the sight blessing our devouring eyes. But these sensations are mingled with low forms of human self-satisfaction. What is sweeter to remember is the desire to worship gratefully the beneficence of the Creator who is so lavish in beauty as well as usefulness. The pearly light just becoming tinged with gold, which invests mountain and valley with an almost ethereal loveliness; the silken mantle of the sea shot with a hundred tender hues, iridescent, glowing and changeful; the activity of the birds and fish in the calm beginning of the day, and the gentle, peaceful hush of it all. It falls upon the soul with a soothing influence as the lullaby of the mother upon the consciousness of the babe; it is healing to the fretted nerves, entirely healthful in its effects, and about it there is nothing enervating.

Gratefully I recall the many instances when I have received these blessings, and never with a fuller appreciation of them than on that exquisite morning when steaming into Basse-Terre Roads, Guadeloupe. Everything was so beautiful, earth and sky and sea, and even the great engines below seemed to be toiling almost noiselessly with just a cadenced throb that

harmonized entirely with all the other peaceful elements of the scene. As we drew near to the anchorage the view took on a solemn interest, for a great graveyard occupied a hillside sloping down to the sea. We were so close in shore that, with the aid of my glasses, I could almost make out the inscriptions upon the monuments erected to those pioneers of civilization who had here rested from their labours. This burial-ground was so beautiful that it almost reconciled me to burial-places, which I have always had a prejudice against for private reasons. However, the combination of heart-filling scenes had doubtless something to do with my frame of mind.

Here, there being no cargo, and but one passenger, we only stayed an hour. I felt that what I should really have enjoyed in these places would have been a private yacht bound to no scheduled time, so that I could have visited the natural wonders at my leisure. For nearly all these leeward islands have something worthy of note to visit, especially in the number of what I should call sub-volcanic agencies, such as sulphur springs, smoking craters, etc. There is really an embarrassment of riches of this kind, and the tourist would be well advised to make up his mind which of the islands he would wish to see thoroughly on one trip, knowing well that he cannot possibly do justice to all of them, and that to attempt too much is only to breed great weariness of the whole pleasant journey.

We left the beautiful French island at 9 a.m. and steered for Roseau, passing close to those tiny islets, the Saints, off which was decided the tremendous struggle between the French and English fleets under Rodney and De Grasse, which settled the question of British ascendancy in the West Indies. Looking out upon those peaceful waters, it needed a very strong effort of the imagination to reconstruct the scene when those wonderful old ships filled all the air with the thunder and smoke of their conflict, and stained the sea with human blood. It was truly a contest of giants, in which both sides fought with almost superhuman bravery until the whole of the surrounding sea was bestrewn with wreckage; and even the conquerors were sorely crippled, having to creep away as best they could and leave many of their lawful prizes to become the spoil of old ocean. And the result of that stupendous sea-fight? I do not believe it would be possible to show that it had any direct result whatever, except the draining of both England and France of blood and treasure, unless the curbing of French ambitions may be deemed a sufficient return for so terrible an outlay.

But we are now enjoying perfect peace, and able as the ship glides gently southward to meditate upon these matters in academic fashion, hoping fervently at the same time that these two great Powers may never again find themselves opposed to each other in such

dire conflict as that. Dominica, in all the splendour of a tropical noon, is coasted, and at 2 p.m. we again arrive at Roseau to find the town *en fête* for Corpus Christi. It was perhaps just as well that there was little business to be done, as the inhabitants seemed determined to have a good time on this great feast-day of the Romish Church. The whole population had turned out in their best clothes, and everybody wore an air of almost feverish excitement. We remained here until sunset, thus having ample time to visit some of the show places in the vicinity of Roseau without hurrying too much. Indeed, our visit here was characterized by a leisureliness that was in striking contrast to the calls made at other islands, and when just as the sun was setting we got under weigh for Martinique, I felt as if we had been anchored as many days as we really had been hours.

I do not know whether to say I am ashamed or glad not to have known anything about our call at Fort de France, Martinique, in the middle of the night. I think my feelings were a compound of both emotions when, on appearing on deck at dawn as usual, I saw that we were steaming into Port Castries, St. Lucia, and realized that, as far as I was concerned, Martinique might as well not have been on the programme at all. A whole day was given us in this pleasant place, allowing ample time to visit such points of interest as we had been obliged to leave out when

we called here going north. But I am not now concerned so much with the island, for there was a British man-of-war in port, and as soon as ever I could get my shore-visiting over, I hurried on board H.M.S. *Tribune* with all the eagerness imaginable. There is something to me inexpressibly fascinating about a British man-of-war in a far-away port. It is like suddenly coming home. There is such a warm welcome always awaiting one; the officers and crew are so genial and jolly that it is a keen delight to visit them. And the *Tribune* was no exception to the good rule. I found myself at home at once, and tore myself away at dinner-time with the greatest reluctance, having, however, the pleasant assurance that I should meet them again at Barbados, whither they, as well as we, were bound. May I say in closing this paragraph that I earnestly advise all tourists never to omit an opportunity of visiting a man-of-war in ports abroad or at home, but especially abroad. In no other way will you get such a good idea of what the Navy really stands for, or get so good a notion of what splendid fellows they are who keep the peace of the seas for us in order that we may roam them whithersoever we will, and that our merchant ships may come and go peacefully bearing the food and raw material of manufactures for the support of our toiling millions at home.

And now we were bound for Barbados again, I feeling almost like going home, so familiar had everything

there grown to be on the two previous occasions. At dawn we had once more the pleasant spectacle of the four Company's ships converging upon the anchorage in Carlisle Bay at the same time from different points of the compass. But as it was the homeward mail-day, we had not the gentle excitement of receiving letters from home. But there was all the bustle of transhipment of cargo and passengers. I felt in no hurry to go ashore, finding ample amusement in watching the movement around me, and I was rewarded by seeing a little comedy enacted that was as funny as anything could possibly be. We had brought a Haytian gentleman of colour, whether a defaulting Chancellor of the Exchequer, general, or president, I do not know, but evidently he was a man of means. Black as a coal, gross and deeply pock-marked in features, and speaking a language that no one on board could understand, he was a notable personage in the saloon, having paid first-class fare. Under his protection was a huge negress, looking like a bag of black jelly cinctured halfway, with a gorgeous turban and a perennial scowl. She was not his wife, for she had a second-class passage, but he certainly was most assiduous in his attentions to her. Arriving at Barbados, the pair were to join some other ship, but when their baggage was sought for it was not to be found. It had disappeared, and the flood of jargon the lady poured forth was something to marvel

at, especially as no one knew in the least what she meant. The gentleman was silent, and apparently bewildered. But after a time the chief officer, in that mysterious way that sailors have, managed to interpret the lady's rhapsody to mean that all her belongings were lost. Also he found out that there were no labels or any other marks upon it by means of which the said luggage could be identified except by the owner. This, however, was a step in the right direction, since all unmarked luggage would certainly be found at the custom-house. Thither the twain were directed to go in charge of a negro boatman who promised that he would explain matters ashore and do his best to get these guileless travellers on board the homeward steamer in time. They were bound, I learned, to Paris, where so many Haytian refugees make for, and whence so many of them have obtained the doctor's degrees, etc., that they append to their names.

I remained on board until the homeward ship sailed, then went ashore to my old quarters, the Marine Hotel, and a genial crack with Captain Owen, the superintendent, resting a little after his long and arduous day's work of getting all the threads of the Company's business straightened out.



XIV

THE SPANISH MAIN

HAVING exhausted Barbados as far as the shore sights were concerned, I rejoiced at the opportunity afforded me the following day of visiting the cruiser *Tribune*, which had arrived in the morning from St. Lucia. I had not the pleasure of meeting her captain, who was ashore, but I had a splendid time with her gallant officers, and left her with the utmost regret. Next morning saw the arrival of the mail from England, and, as usual, Carlisle Bay immediately became a scene of utmost animation. I, however, did not take so much interest in the busy scene as heretofore, because I had a rather heavy mail, and in my quiet cabin on board the *Eden*, was engaged in gathering together the threads of my home connections, an occupation which was to me both pleasant and profitable. I may say just here that nothing could exceed the attention and assiduous service rendered me by the coloured waiters and bedroom steward on board the *Eden*. Their behaviour was a great contrast to



Ripe Bananas.

the lackadaisical and supercilious manner of the hotel servants, and I am glad to be able to note that the coloured man can be a good servant when he will. At 3 p.m. there was the usual exodus of the fleet, the *Solent* leaving for Demerara, the *Esk* for the northern islands, the *Orinoco* for Trinidad, and we for St. Vincent and the south. The harbour looked quite deserted as we steamed away, although there were still a good many vessels at anchor. But none of them, with the exception of H.M.S. *Tribune*, seemed of any importance, so lofty had my ideas become of the work of the Royal Mail Company. And so out we steamed into the night, and, after a very pleasant evening with my friends, the officers off watch, retired to rest with the confident expectation of awaking at St. Vincent in the early dawn.

I was on deck at daybreak to watch the ship entering the harbour, but knowing that we were to leave at breakfast-time, I did not attempt to go ashore, and I was very glad of the resolution presently. For we lay well out from the shore, in about twelve fathoms of water, and I found the best fishing of the whole cruise. There was something very mysterious about that fishing though, for the bulk of my catch was the lovely sapphirine gurnard, which I had hitherto imagined to be confined to the Arabian Sea. Moreover, it is a veritable flying fish, having wings more like those of a large bat than any member belonging to a fish.

These wings were of a deep plum colour, spotted with brightest blue, and when extended formed a broad fan from the fish's snout to its tail. Everything about them pointed to their being a surface fish, yet I caught them on the bottom, and only a fathom upward I could not get a bite. None of the negroes appeared to know anything of them, they all said they had never seen them before, and when I offered them my catch to eat, they respectfully declined having anything to do with them. Other handsome fish I caught were the mutton fish and the ning-ning, local names that I have never heard before, but both looking eminently edible. So good was the sport that I felt quite grieved when the bell announced our departure. After so many disappointments in the fishing line, I was loth to leave the most prolific hunting-ground I had been anchored on for many a day.

We embarked several passengers here for Trinidad and home, and I heard from them some lurid accounts of the terrible eruption of the "Souffrière," as St. Vincent's volcano is called, when in sympathy with Mont Pelée, in Martinique, apparently, it vomited forth its dreadful mass of ashes, scoriæ, and poisonous gases, dealing death and destruction all around and depositing an estimated weight of 1,700,000 tons of fine dust upon Barbados, 100 miles away. Coming upon a series of unfortunate years, this would seem to have been a final blow to all prosperity on the

island, but I am glad to say that there were signs that the plucky people were making gallant headway again, and that their hopes were not entirely dead. Here there had been the greatest number of the aboriginal inhabitants, Caribs, but the eruption had very nearly caused their total extinction.

We left Kingstown harbour at 8.30 for Grenada, another most beautiful British possession, and one that is really prosperous in a quiet way. We had a very pleasant, quiet run across, and arrived at St. George's at 3.30 p.m. The entrance to this almost landlocked little harbour is somewhat of a surprise, for the town appearing right ahead, it looks as if the ship should steam straight in and anchor in an open roadstead under the lee of a promontory that stretches seaward from the town. Instead of that, a sudden detour is made when quite close in, the promontory is rounded, and the harbour opens up, almost as sheltering as a dock. There is not much room in it, and no small skill is requisite in the handling of a large steamer, especially if there be, as there usually is, many small craft at anchor. But we came alongside the pier cosily enough, and were immediately besieged by a clamorous crowd of porters, etc., who, however, were kept from boarding us by the police, as, having abused the privilege formerly granted them of coming aboard, they were now forbidden to do so at all.

The Company's agent kindly invited me up to the club, an exceedingly comfortable one, and most hospitably entertained me there, introducing me to several prosperous-looking gentlemen, who seemed as if life in Grenada was not at all insupportable. It was too late to make any excursion into the island, although it is exceedingly well worth visiting, especially for those who, unlike myself, are at home on horseback. So I remained at the club instead, enjoying myself very much in a quiet way, until it was time to saunter down on board again. When we left it was very dark, and remembering the exceedingly scanty room for handling the ship, I was much interested in the way she was turned in little more than her own length and taken out. I confess that I do not even now know how it was done. I only know that at 10 p.m. we were clear of the harbour and steaming away east for Tobago.

We arrived on the coast of Tobago Island at daybreak, and at 7.30 anchored in the pleasant roadstead of Scarborough. I had the good fortune to find an early-rising companion, who, knowing the island perfectly, had made up his mind that this was the veritable island of Robinson Crusoe as limned by Defoe. Utterly sceptical as I was, as not believing that Defoe was ever here, and that he drew upon his splendid imagination for all his details, as so many authors have done with great success, I could not

help being interested as well as amused, my friend's enthusiasm was so great. To my mild suggestion of Juan Fernandez he turned a most scornful ear. He asserted that, apart from the direct statements of the narrative being all in the direction of an island of the Caribees, there was not one single point of resemblance between Defoe's island and Juan Fernandez, while Tobago satisfied the requirements of the narrative in every particular. In fact, so vivid were this gentleman's descriptions, and so forceful his assertions, that I presently found myself on the brink of believing that Robinson Crusoe was as real a personage, and his narrative a story of actual facts, just as much as I did when first that inimitable yarn fell into my hands, and it was all as real to me as my immediate surroundings. Of one thing I remain persuaded, and that is that no place so well satisfies the requirements of the story as Tobago, and perhaps I had better leave it at that, merely stating that I came to this conclusion after having my enthusiastic friend's rhapsodies buttressed by the calm statements of one of the officers of the *Spey*, a small yacht-like steamer belonging to the Royal Mail Company, which plies around the coasts of Tobago and Trinidad.

The agent of the Company extended to me the most cordial invitation to come ashore and have a ride, avowing that it was the finest place in all the West Indies for this splendid exercise, and I fear I

fell tremendously in his estimation when I had to admit that I could not stay on a horse even if I were glued to the saddle. He said presently, with a pitying air, that of course that was hard for him to understand, seeing that he almost lived in the saddle—was as much at home there, in fact, as in a chair. In any case, our stay was too short for shore-going—under two hours—so I rested perfectly content with my fishing-lines, while my younger fellow-voyagers took a scamper, returning just before sailing with their usual taunts at what they called my lack of energy. But all was good-natured and pleasant, and consequently we were always on the best of terms, and enjoyed ourselves most thoroughly. So we left the pretty island in high feather, and after a six hours' most pleasant run, steamed in once more through the majestic entrance to the Gulf of Paria, in the full glory of a golden afternoon, anchoring off Port of Spain at 4.30.

A considerable number of passengers awaited us here, for we were bound for the capital of Venezuela, and in spite of the unsettled condition of that typical South American republic, there were many going thither on business of various kinds. We had quite a busy time until nine o'clock that night, with visitors in numbers, and the ship hummed like a hive swarming. I began to find my almost forgotten Spanish coming back to me again, as I heard that

mellifluous language being spoken all around me. Also I heard many things about the extraordinary sayings and doings of the autocratic ruler of Venezuela, Don Cipriano Castro, and began to wonder whether I should have the opportunity of making the acquaintance of the man who had nearly succeeded in embroiling England, the United States, and Germany. Of one thing I felt already assured, and that was that he was no ordinary adventurer who could succeed as he had done in so troubling the waters of international politics, and yet kept himself riding upon the crest of the waves in such wise and to make himself as absolute a ruler as any old-world potentate. And yet I was grieved to think that any man should have the power to play ducks-and-drakes with so wonderful a country as Venezuela just from petty motives of personal aggrandizement, and incidentally be the cause of so much misery. However, at this time all was for me only a matter of hearsay, confided to me by subjects of his who would not have dared to tell such tales out of school to one of their own compatriots. Yet in all they said there was a certain note of triumph, of admiration for the colossal cheek of a man who could do what he had done, and also a sort of pitying contempt for the British patience that endured these slights and flouts and jeers, apparently because they did not know what else to do. All of them were agreed upon one point though, and that was

that of the three great nations that the Dictator was playing with he hated Britain most, because she dared to possess Trinidad, a haven of refuge for all those discontented ones who did not care for his rule. He could not forget that escaping revolutionists had only to reach Trinidad to be safe from the rifles of his myrmidons, and if he ever remembered that he might need to secure asylum one day himself, he probably thought with a sneer that he would get it all the same, since Britons were such fools as to forgive freely a fallen enemy, and afford him all the assistance and shelter in their power.

Our first port of call was Carupano, the nearest seaport to Ciudad Bolivar, one of the principal towns, or cities I suppose I must call them, of Venezuela. We arrived at daybreak the next morning, and anchored in the roads opposite a mean-looking collection of houses and a church. With the coming alongside of the first boats we were immediately aware of the fact that we were in a country where the best law-giver was a revolver and a steady arm behind it. The individuals who came on board were a far more energetic-looking lot than we had seen in Colombia, but I could not help noting with some uneasiness that they nearly all had an ominous bulge behind them betokening the presence of a weapon. Also it was impossible to avoid noticing how very marked was the Indian blood. With few

exceptions all the visitors bore traces of it, and some were manifestly almost pure-blooded aborigines. But all traces of their long subservience to Spanish rule had passed. They bore themselves as proudly as the most haughty hidalgo of old Spain. Here I heard of a quaint and ingenious custom worthy of an American Labour boss or Trust magnate. The fare for going ashore was two dollars, the distance being well under two miles. But in case the passenger availed himself of the ship's boat, a landing fee of two dollars was charged, so that, to use a colloquialism, it was broad as it was long. Who got the landing fee I was unable to learn, but I doubt very much if it was the boatman, who might otherwise have had a passenger. However, there did not appear to be many inducements to visit the shore, and I, at any rate, felt none. I was quite content to admire the scenery from the clean and comfortable vantage-ground of the ship.

I caught a few fish during our stay, but was not sorry that it was short, and at 8 a.m. we weighed again for Margarita, the wonderful island of the pearl fisheries so graphically written of by Kingsley in "Westward Ho!" Coasting along the land, we arrived at Porlamar, the port of Margarita, at 2 p.m., finding the whole of the bay dotted with the white sails of the oyster dredgers. No sooner were we at anchor than visitors swarmed on board, men of all European nationalities, I should think, but English, the Jewish

element predominating. This is, indeed, a happy hunting-ground for that curious class of man who lives by dealing in precious stones and pearls, and a lucrative source of revenue for the Venezuelan Government, since, although fortunes are to be made here, the various imposts are tremendously high. Taxation of all kinds is terrific, but as usual in such places, judicious bribery greatly mitigates its weight. Here, if anywhere, it may truly be said that every man has his price, so that smuggling is almost as lucrative a pursuit as pearl-dealing. I heard one story from a French dealer, which I give for what it may be worth. He told me that ten years before he had commenced business as a pearl buyer, having a partner in Paris. His capital (borrowed) was six thousand francs at the commencement. And to-day he was worth forty thousand pounds, exclusive of over sixty pounds' weight of pearls which he was taking home by the next ship, and in spite of the fact that he paid two visits to Paris each year. Really his story may be true, for I myself know of a case on board where a dealer bought a cluster of pearls—sometimes they are found in a lump joined together like a tiny bullock's kidney—for ten dollars from a fellow-dealer, and sold it again less than an hour afterwards for twenty-five pounds!

Oh, they were an amazingly curious gang! But I noticed that they were just as keen over a deal

involving only two or three dollars as they were over one of as many thousands. And they did not seem to find life hang heavy on their hands. They were absorbed, enwrapped in their business, and nothing else mattered. I don't think I ever saw men enjoy themselves more, or associated with any people who in the midst of the most boisterous mirth were more constantly watchful of the main chance. No tie of friendship or relationship would, I should say, prevent them from getting the better of one another in a deal whenever that was possible. Of course, they were lavish and colossal gamblers—was not their life one long gambling game? I could not help wondering how the actual getters of the pearls fared at the hands of these accomplished dealers; what proportion the wage they earned bore to the price the pearls they had dragged from the reluctant sea-bed were sold for in Paris, which all agreed was the only real market for pearls in all the world. But that I could not ascertain.

We were here for nine hours, and they passed in a continuous whirl of excitement, so that the idea of going ashore was absurd—what could there be to see in that wretched collection of mean houses, especially when all the population who were at all interesting were on board the ship, and making things fairly hum? I tried to fish, and at the first cast brought up from the bottom a cluster of six pearl oysters. There were



no pearls in them, for they were immature, but it gave me a good notion of the enormous number of these valuable bivalves there must be in these waters. They have been fished for nearly three hundred years, and are now yielding more profusely than ever, while the money return—pearls being now so fashionable, and consequently so costly—is almost incalculable.

Our next port being La Guayra, the port of the capital of Venezuela, Caracas, we carried a large and motley crowd of passengers. With the exception of the crew, it seemed as if every one spoke Spanish, albeit with a variety of accents. It was a source of amused speculation to me what this strange collection of adventurers might be bound to Caracas for, since judging from what I had heard, the farther they kept away from the seat of government and the presence of Don Cipriano, the better, except indeed for those who were his agents. Many of them had their wives and children with them, and it was pathetic to see how utterly spiritless and unenergetic the women were, and what curious little people were the children. One instance of throw-back in the children was very strange, and exercised my mind until the parties left. The father was an exceedingly handsome man, dark brown in colour, and with almost pure Greek features. The mother was of the same colour, but not so handsome—still her features were entirely Caucasian. But the children, a boy and a girl of, I

should say, seven and eight years old respectively, were copper-coloured, with high cheek-bones and Mongolian eyes—pure blooded Indios to all appearance, bearing not the slightest resemblance to either parent. I felt that it was a problem for a student of ethnography, and far beyond me. There were other curious developments of the same nature on board, but this was by far the most marked.

We left Porlamar at 6 p.m., and immediately upon our departure the women took up positions on the quarter-deck, from which I did not see one of them budge again until our arrival at La Guayra. They were all saloon passengers, but they did not enter that luxurious department, or appear to take any refreshment save a little fruit which they had brought with them. They were, in fact, a very orderly, quiet crowd, only a few of the men-folk crowding the smoke-room, and gambling all the time. We arrived at La Guayra, classic La Guayra, at eight the next morning, and proceeded at once within the breakwater, which was as well and solidly built as such structures are in all Southern and Central American ports, with railway tracks running right down alongside the vessels. One Dutch and one United States steamer were alongside, and in the little bay was a curious little gunboat flying the Venezuelan flag, also a few schooners under the same colours. The harbour is an entirely artificial one, formed by the really fine breakwater curving out

from an otherwise straight coast-line, without shelter of any kind. As we drew alongside, I could not help noticing, although the day was yet so young, how terrible the sun's heat was. For the mountains so graphically described by Kingsley in "Westward Ho!" tower upward almost from the water's edge, and the houses are clustered against its rocky flanks without shade of any kind. Consequently, the place becomes an oven, and even in the shade of the houses there is still heat that is, though dry, exceedingly hard to bear. But I am getting on too fast. Or ever we were alongside, an officer of sorts had boarded us from the "man-of-war," accompanied by a civilian scribe, and, taking possession of the smoke-room, was busy ascertaining the most intimate facts concerning every passenger desirous of proceeding to the capital. His labours were assisted by the police, or perhaps I should call them gendarmerie, who, as the ship was berthed, mounted guard at the gangways, and allowed no one ashore. Having heard that the train times were rigidly fixed for 8.30 a.m. and 3 p.m., and no departure therefrom could be entertained for a moment, and realizing that at the rate the investigation into each passenger's life history was proceeding most of the day would be gone before permission to go ashore would be granted, I ventured to ask what this minute scrutiny portended. And I was told that every detail concerning would-be visitors to the capital must be

telephoned to the President-Dictator, and in his absence to his representative, and only by his special permission was anybody allowed to land.

Truly these people have queer notions of liberty, especially as I was credibly informed that the scrutiny was much more severe in the case of citizens than for foreigners. But I could not scoff at Venezuela, remembering the minute details I had to fill in about my family when I visited the United States a few years ago on a pleasure tour, their names, ages, sex, whether married or single, nationality, means of support, and so on. I know that the amusement exceeded the annoyance when I entered that Frank T. Bullen was a boy, aged eight, unmarried, and dependent upon his father for support, with other valuable matter of a like nature. Only one passenger, a French dealer in pearls, was objected to, much to his disgust; every one else was allowed to go ashore just after the morning train had left for Caracas. There were two freight trains going up afterwards at short intervals, but it seemed an impossibility to hitch on a passenger car to either of those trains and allow the poor people who were waiting about in that detestable oven to escape into the coolness of the uplands before three o'clock in the afternoon. But I gratefully record the fact that when I accepted the invitation of the Company's agent to visit Caracas, I was not asked to furnish any details whatever, neither

was my baggage examined at all (true I had only had a suit case with enough for a couple of days' stay in it). And I was informed that during the tourist season of the Royal Mail ships the same courtesy was extended to all tourists, which is a concession indeed on the part of Dictator Castro that is exceedingly noticeable, and we need not inquire too closely into the why of it.

Going ashore at 3 p.m. for the journey to Caracas, I could not help wondering however the people lived in La Guayra. I think it is without exception the hottest place I have ever known, the Persian Gulf not excepted. But its advantage over the latter place is great, for the atmosphere is wonderfully dry, and consequently a much greater heat is bearable. I was mightily glad, though, when the train pulled out from the furnace of a station, and, running past a most quaint collection of hovels along the foot of the hill, began the great upward climb. Then I forgot the heat and everything else but the romantic character of the land I was traversing. The railway wound round the mountain flanks, giving frequent glimpses of the mule road, along which laden pack-animals were coming, as they have done for three centuries. As we rose higher and higher along the steep gradients and around the sharp curves, we caught occasional glimpses of the sea and the harbour far below; then we would be shut out by mighty hills,

clothed from dim base to misty summit with all the luxuriant vegetation of this lavish clime. And I thought of the mail-clad conquistadores tramping in utter torment through those steaming forests in pursuit of gold and glory; of the sturdy Elizabethan Englishmen following after, and enduring such miseries as our softer generation can only guess at. We lay back and listened to the panting engine doing and toiling for us, grumbling at the heat and the dust, and at somebody's negligence in not providing a sufficiency of iced water, all unconscious of the grim labours of those heroes of old.

Upward, ever upward, we sped at a really rapid rate, considering the steepness of the gradients and the smallness of the locomotive, until we emerged upon the plain on which Caracas is built, two hours from La Guayra, but with an alteration of temperature as great as that between an ordinary spring day in England and one in, say, Cuba. For we were now three thousand feet above the sea, surrounded by mountains rising to three times that height, but having gorges between them, through which blew beautifully cool breezes. At first sight the city looked quite imposing, reminding me rather of Christchurch, New Zealand. But as soon as we entered one of the fine public vehicles and drove off, the usual Central American features of the place asserted themselves. In less than five minutes I had

decided that, in spite of the grandiloquent assumption of the title of "the Paris of South America," Caracas is in every detail a long way behind San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica. We were taken to the Gran Hotel, a rather pleasant hostelry in a side street, away from the bustle of the Central Plaza Bolivar, and proceeded to make ourselves as comfortable as the somewhat primitive arrangements of a Central American hotel would allow.

After a bath and a meal, I sallied out alone for a little walk before turning in, feeling a sort of naughty pleasure in escaping from those hospitable souls who wanted to "show me around." And I confess that in the brilliant moonlight, and under the glare of the sizzling electrics, the beautiful tree-clad square of the Plaza Bolivar looked most animated. It was crowded with people promenading, listening to a fine band, and enjoying the freshness of the evening. But I was led to suppose that, as on the Plaza de Armas at Havana, at eventide I should see all the beauty and fashion of Caracas assembled. It was a mistake, for the ladies were conspicuous by their absence. The only females about were visitors and poor people bound on various errands. But of men there were an enormous number, both well-to-do and poor. Also there was great decorum and entire absence of horse-play and noise, great appreciation of the good music, and no beggars. This last feature impressed one

greatly, in view of the fact that, from what I had already noticed, there must be much distress. Yet during the whole of my stay in Caracas I was never asked for alms but once, and that was by a well-dressed woman who did not look as if she needed charity. I was told that the law was exceedingly stringent against mendicancy, and as there are a great number of armed police about, it is strictly enforced. A very little of the aimless promenading common to all these places satisfied me, and I quietly retreated to my room at the hotel, and was asleep almost as soon as my head touched the pillow.

XV

CARACAS AND BACK TOWARDS HOME

I AWOKE at 5.30 to find the morning glorious and a cup of excellent coffee obtainable at once, the latter a boon that travellers accustomed to early rising miss very sorely at home. It may seem a small thing, but it is one complaint I have to make about travelling in my own country, that the early riser is looked upon as a nuisance. He ought not to want a cup of tea or coffee before breakfast-time. But if I do not get that hot beverage upon rising, my morning is spoilt, for I do not care a snap for breakfast, or indeed anything to eat until midday. And however willing one may be to help one's self, it is seldom possible to do so. On board ship or abroad coffee or tea is always to be got at six, or even earlier, if one knows how. So I had my coffee, and sallied forth for a long walk, finding much to interest me in the way of asses and mules coming in from the country laden with produce for the markets, everything apparently being transported on the backs of the animals, and wheeled transport being non-existent. By the all-revealing light of

that clear morning the municipal buildings, the cathedral, the houses, and the shops showed tawdry, unrepaired, and uncleansed. They told in plainest language of the earnest efforts of some men to make Caracas worthy of its position as the capital city of this truly magnificent country; but, alas! they also told of the utter failure of those attempts in consequence of the irreclaimable instability of rule. I feel ashamed of repeating the statement of the one fact immediately obvious to any observer in all these countries, that all they need to be really great in progress, as they are all naturally great in all the ways that nature can provide, is an honest, stable Government, whose heads are not ever keeping one eye on the spoils they are raking in, and the other on the sailing advertisements for Europe in case of an uprising of the hungry have-nots.

But I enjoyed my walk all the same. The air was so pure, the views all around so lovely, that I returned to breakfast quite invigorated, and ready for any amount of personally conducted sight-seeing. Finding that I was full early for the morning meal, I ventured into conversation with the only interpreter the hotel possessed, a Jamaican negro, who occupied an anomalous position—I never knew whether he was night porter, waiter, or gardener. I only know that he was always in evidence, that he slept on a charpoy just inside the door, and that he was constantly being

appealed to by the proprietor, an amiable Venezuelan gentleman who knew not one word of any language but Spanish, and harassed visitors who knew not a word of that sonorous tongue, to be the medium of communication. I found that he, like so many more of his fellows whom I had met on this tour, was consumed with a desire to go to England. I asked him whether the United States would not suit him better—and roused him out of his habitually gentle and deferential attitude to an emphasis of refusal that I shall not record.

After breakfast—I will say no more about the food, having been made unduly proud by being told that I am hopelessly biassed in favour of the plain, wholesome food of my own land—I was taken in one of the comfortable carriages for a round of visits. Apparently it is *infra dig.* to walk here, as the places we were to visit were only a few hundred yards away, and quite close together. This hired vehicle, like all the rest I had seen, was apparently quite new, with silver-plated harness and fittings flashing in the sun, the leather upholstering and bright paint looking as if it had just left the coachmaker's hands. Also the caballero who drove us was urbane, genial, and not at all servile, as befitted a man of worth and dignity who did not need to bluster or cringe. What his charges were I never knew, for my courteous hosts carefully prevented me from paying for anything.

Among the places we visited were two clubs, which were, I should say, the most delightfully comfortable in their arrangements of any I had seen out in this part of the world. One, perhaps the most —luxurious, I was going to say, but that is hardly the word—perfectly fitted for the enjoyment of its members in a climate like this, was, I was told, formerly the house of a general who was now in exile. Consequently the club occupies his house and pays rent for it to the Government, which, of course, has confiscated his property. But I could not help thinking of the tamasha there would be if ever that exiled warrior comes back again in power! The secretary of this club had a little English, and as my Spanish was fast coming back to me, we had a most pleasant conversation. He asked me most pathetically to "say something nice about us," meaning, I presume, Venezuela *en bloc.* I promised, but an imp of mischief prompted me to inquire why he wished me to do this, seeing that English opinion was systematically scorned as being of the smallest possible value. To which there was no fluent answer forthcoming. I believe he was in some exalted position in Dictator Castro's *soi-disant* Government.

One thing forced itself upon my notice in both these sumptuous places for the recreation of Venezuela's merchants and statesmen, and that was that their fine libraries were almost entirely French. Which gives

furiously to think, for it is surely a truism that French philosophy and French theories of government, especially when translated into action by the citizens of South American republics, always lead to serious upheavals and complications. I regretted the absence of English books, Spanish literature I did not expect to find. We severely eschewed politics; indeed, having regard to what I had been told of Don Cipriano's almost perfect system of espionage, I ardently desired not to enter into political matters at all, even if any of my interlocutors had suggested such a thing. Thence we went to El Calvario, a beautiful eminence from which the city may be viewed as a whole, spread out at one's feet. The hill is laid out as a public garden, and is crowned by a curious edifice rising tier upon tier, with a winding road at a gentle incline running round it, which brings the traveller almost imperceptibly to the top. *That* is just a barren plateau of stone, which I was told was formerly crowned by a magnificent statue of the then President, upon whose deposition it was promptly destroyed by the successful candidate.

The Dictator being absent on a tour of the country, we paid a visit to his palace, the Casa Amarilla, or Yellow House, which, as all such places under truly democratic (?) institutions should be, is open to the public. It is a pleasant but not at all imposing building, the approaches to which are through a

number of exceedingly mean streets, looking meaner by reason of the necessity for keeping all the houses of one story on account of earthquakes. But when we got round to the front of the building we found the main entrance quite grand, and commanding a view of the city almost as extensive as that from El Calvario. The lounging sentries at the entrance took no notice of us, but a servant in plain clothes was very courteous and showed us the house thoroughly. There was nothing at all lavish about its appointments, and the only noticeable things were the number of portraits of the Dictator hanging about, not one of which succeeded in making him look anything but a cunning, unscrupulous adventurer, although the engrossed addresses underneath some of them, the presentation portraits, made him out to be Mr. Gladstone, George Washington, and Napoleon rolled into one. Leading out of Dona Castro's apartments was a private chapel, at which I wondered, knowing that the Dictator was no admirer of the Church, and had banished the religious orders. But then, if it were not for the women Rome would have been banished altogether from South America long ago. What was really pretty in the palace was the *patio*, or courtyard, adorned with lovely plants, aviaries of rare birds and fountains. Of course it was open to the sky, which added to its attractiveness in fine weather, although during the heavy rains I should think it was rather miserable.



A really beautiful drive followed along a good road and amid splendid scenery. This was the best part of the city I had yet seen, although there were few houses, and only one building of note, a fine erection intended for a college. Long before I was tired of this lovely drive we saw approaching from the mountains a most menacing procession of inky clouds, and the driver urged his horses to their utmost speed for the return, reaching the hotel two minutes before the windows of heaven opened and the rain fell with a continuous deafening roar, that made the tremendous thunder only half audible, and dimmed the great blaze of the lightning. After this celestial manifestation of power had lasted about half an hour, the weather cleared and the moon shone out dazzlingly, the atmosphere being exceedingly sweet and fresh. So I strolled out again alone and discovered why it was that the ladies did not put in an appearance at the public promenade. They were all sitting, gorgeously apparelled, behind iron-barred windows, gazing listlessly into the street, an occupation that would have been tedious enough, I thought, had it been a crowded thoroughfare instead of being almost deserted. None were working or reading or appeared to have any mental occupation whatever. It was to me a very sad sight.

As a finish to the day's outing I went to the theatre, a fine building standing in an open space and

looking quite imposing in the moonlight. I stayed half an hour, enduring with a great weariness a sort of variety show that was futile and uninteresting beyond the power of words to describe—the sort of thing one used to be entertained would need large pay to sit through. But it had one good effect upon me, it made me desire my bed, and I hurried thither as speedily as possible, falling asleep almost immediately after laying my head upon the pillow.

Next morning, at my usual early hour, I visited the market, and found it the most interesting place I had yet seen. Apparently everything that the inhabitants could require was on sale, but I was especially fascinated by the fruit, flowers, and vegetables, all of which looked tempting and beautifully fresh. The meat and cheese were just horrible, especially the former. Much of it was in long strips, salted and dried, and stinking abominably. In fact, it drove me away at last, wondering however such carrion could be eaten by anybody. But the medley of curious races, the bustle, the mixture of commodities, and the spate of strange talk was so wonderful that nothing but that vilely smelling flesh could have made me leave until I was tired out.

Remembering suddenly that the train for La Guayra left at 8.30, and that this was the *Eden's* sailing day, I hurried back and made my simple preparations for departure most willingly. I had seen enough of Caracas. And to this day I wonder, having



seen San José, however the Venezuelans can call it the Paris of South America. I believe, too, that if any place could merit such a title it would be Buenos Ayres. I have not been there, but from all the reports I have received it must be a most magnificent city, and in any case, the statistics of its trade prove that it must be one of the leading ports of the world.

I admit that I began the downward journey with considerable misgivings. I pride myself on not meeting trouble halfway, but, do what I would, I could not forget those gradients and sharp turnings. It was all very well coming up, but sliding down was quite another matter, and I wished it was over. Some people, Alpine climbers for instance, would enjoy such sensations, but I do not. I suppose I am surfeited, and wish only for safety nowadays. So I looked as little as possible out of the window going down until the train was side-tracked about halfway, and some one called my attention to the spectacle of the Superintendent of the line flying down past on his private trolly at the rate, I should say, of one hundred miles an hour. I was told that this was his every morning amusement, heightened very much if he could only get a novice to share his perch. Just two or three planks and four wheels and a brake, which I don't think he ever used. Some day I suppose that contraption will mount the rails, and shooting off into space at the elbow of a curve, cannon from one cliff to

another a thousand feet or so, and Mr. Superintendent will have enjoyed his final sensation. I have omitted to mention that he and his railway are English.

Gradually we descended into the furnace of La Guayra, and with all haste I got me on board into clean, wholesome life again. I heard a doleful story of the heat endured during my absence by those condemned to remain on board, all hands with whom I spoke professing their intense eagerness to get away. We left punctually at noon, the appointed time, and after a delightful night arrived at Porlamar again at daybreak. There being some cargo here, mostly pearl-shell, and the service of the most dilatory imaginable, we did not get away until noon, the ship being for the whole six hours a seething vortex of excitement. And I cannot wonder, for the advent of a mail steamer is an event to be eagerly looked for in so barbarous a spot as this. But I was very glad when the warning-bell sounded and the motley crowd dispersed. For various reasons, chief among which was the fact that I was now homeward bound, which to me is the sweetest part of foreign travel, however delightful it may be, and one of its chief uses—it teaches the Briton to place its proper value upon his own dear country, the best, freest, and most comfortable in the round world.

Of our call at Carupano I have nothing to record. It was absolutely without incident, and, to my relief,

we only remained at the place an hour, leaving at dusk for Trinidad, where we arrived at daylight.

Here I bade farewell to my genial shipmates of the *Eden* with a feeling of real sadness at losing their bright fellowship and a sense of desertion hanging over me to temper my delight at going home. They had to remain and face the coming months of dread, the time when all who are able, leave these parts and get to a bearable climate. Also there was a feeling that I may never meet those good fellows again. But if ever they see these lines, they will know that I have not forgotten them, nor ever can while to me life remaineth. I might have gone on with them to Tobago, etc., and back to Barbados, but it had been intimated to me that I had best stop off at Trinidad and join the home-going steamer there, and as I am essentially a docile person, I accepted this hint as if it were a command, and said farewell. But as if the fates were conspiring to do me good, I found an invitation awaiting me from one whom I had long admired as a master hand at interpreting the Eastern spirit, Hugh Clifford, creator of "In Court and Kampong." He was acting Governor of Trinidad, and with that true catholicity that I have found so delightful in my brief literary career, he gave me the warmest invitation and welcome to Government House for my stay, and when I went to call upon him to beg off as unworthy, he and his charming lady made it impossible for me to refuse.

Consequently I was glad that I had not landed at Trinidad on my three previous visits, since I now had a couple of days—three as it turned out—of clear enjoyment under the brightest possible auspices. What I then saw of Port of Spain impressed me mightily and made me feel that, in spite of what I had hitherto heard about our West Indian possessions while visiting them, I had at last come to the most progressive and prosperous of them all. Port of Spain is a fine town, a clean town, and a well-governed town, in spite of the late lamentable riot, which, after all, was only an episode due, I should say, principally to our absurd pampering of the negro man, who with all his virtues is a big baby, and, as babies are, liable to unreasoning hysterical fits of anger when allowed to have his own way too much. However, this is ancient history as far as Trinidad is concerned, and I earnestly hope will not be allowed to repeat itself.

I did not know how to be sufficiently repentant about my thoughts of this beautiful town because I had seen that woolly mist hanging over it in the early dawn from the anchorage. I found even at this season of the year its climate perfectly delightful. From 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. it was hot, blisteringly, broilingly hot—that cannot be gainsaid, but in the evenings and early mornings the change was amazing. I could not understand the sudden transition from that baking heat to almost cold. An evening drive around the



Savanna at Port of Spain, or a trip on one of the well-appointed electric cars, is something to remember with feelings of gratitude ever after. Here, too, I renewed my acquaintance with the Far East. The coolie from Bombay and Bengal was much in evidence, and had his own quarter of the town wherein to live as he listed, subject to, what he would doubtless call the absurd Western ideas of sanitation. And he contributed in no small degree to the picturesqueness of the place, all the more, I thought, because he was not allowed to wallow amid unclean surroundings as at home.

The gardens of Government House were filled with a splendid collection of almost all the valuable vegetable products of the tropics. A saunter round them in the morning with an intelligent guide was most enjoyable and highly informing, yet without that overwhelming sense of the impossibility of rightly appreciating the vegetable wonders around that one has in a regular botanic garden set apart for that purpose alone. I had not the pleasure of meeting the gentleman responsible for those beautiful grounds, but I know that I enjoyed my walks therein more than ever I have done at Kew or at Regent's Park, simply because, I suppose, it was so much more free and natural, and there was not too much to take in. But the glory of the gardens to me was a mighty tree with wide-spreading branches, of which I forget the name. It towered to a height of about seventy feet, and spread

out in proportion, and from ground to summit it was clothed in a splendid mantle of loveliness by a Bougainvillæa creeper, or vine. The amazing beauty of those thousands of flaming bunches of blossoms exceeded all that I had ever imagined of floral beauty, and I could only wonder and worship.

These gardens are open to the public, and front the immense open space called the Savanna, only separated therefrom by a road which skirts the aforesaid pleasaunce. This road is bordered on one side by pleasant residences, each standing in its own grounds. None of them were at all palatial, but each looks home-like and comfortable. And as the electric trolly cars pass all the doors, transit between these homes and the centre of the town is a matter of the simplest, and carriages are rendered almost a superfluity. A really beautiful hotel, well managed and comfortable in the extreme, occupies a large space of ground facing the Savanna. I am not going back upon Constant Springs, Jamaica, where I was exceedingly comfortable, but I do say unhesitatingly that Queen's Park Hotel, Port of Spain, is, as far as my judgment goes, by far the best in the West Indies. Every room on the ground floor is double, the inner portion being the sleeping chamber, the outer a sitting-room with French windows opening into a wide verandah with steps leading down into the garden. The building has only two floors, so that

there are no staircases worth mentioning, and is as well appointed as the most fastidious traveller could desire, without that overwhelming luxury which is so often—nearly always—a foe to comfort and homeliness.

The town itself is spacious and well kept, with an absence of that tawdriness which is so marked a feature of West Indian towns generally. I am sorry to use rather an ugly word to describe what I mean, but no other will fit. I could explain my meaning at once by mentioning certain big shops in London and Paris, only I should be ruined by libel actions. But I think I shall be understood. You all know the great shop where heaps of goods are piled anyhow, with basketfuls of rubbish interspersed and ticketed at sums varying from a penny to threepence—great stores where they are, *à l'Americaine*, in the throes of a perpetual sacrifice sale, getting rid of stock at half price and living on the losses. And I hope you know the delight of dealing with the other kind, where all is orderly, the attendants are polite without being servile, and what you want is offered you upon asking for it, as if it had just to be wished for to appear like magic. I know the shops I mean, and so, I think, do you, but I dare not mention them because of being accused of advertising.

One feature of Port of Spain always afforded me much amusement, the small vultures—John Crows—

who are the carefully protected auxiliary scavengers of the place. They are about the size of a small turkey, in colour a dingy black, and they parade all the streets with an air of conscious immunity from interference and stately dignity that is intensely funny. I do not know what the fine is for interfering with them in any way, or doing them harm, but I believe it is a heavy one. At any rate, no town-bred pigeon, saucy as it is, behaves with so much *insouciance*. They strut about the pavements and in the middle of the streets, keeping ever a keen eye for anything edible (and their ideas of edibility are exceedingly spacious), and will barely take the trouble to get out of the way even of the flying electric cars. For foot-passengers they make no way, you must avoid them. But the pleasure of watching them in their ludicrously grave manœuvres is tempered with disgust when a trio of them are engaged in tugging at a recent dog, or cat, or rat, and the quite unlovely details force themselves upon your notice. I looked with considerable curiosity at these dingy fowls when they sauntered near the butchers' shops, wondering whether they had been trained in any way to avoid looting. And I am bound to say, although I often saw them casting longing eyes upon the meat, they never attempted to enter. I could not learn how they had been taught, but I suspect the lessons, when necessary, were severe.

The time drew near for my departure, the *Orinoco*, homeward bound *viâ* Barbados, being due, so I bade farewell to my kind and genial hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Clifford, and sending my impedimenta on to the Company's office, *en route* for the ship, went to the Queen's Park Hotel to wait until the telephone should announce her arrival. But the meteorological fates were unpropitious. A truly tropical storm came on, and for hours the rain fell in solid masses, accompanied with thunder and lightning. At last, as it was evident that the good ship must be much delayed in her journey from Jamaica, I went to bed, being assured that watch would be kept all night, and that I should be aroused in ample time to get on board. The prospect of having to do so in such weather was not inviting, but I did not trouble about that, realizing that while any inconvenience which I might suffer was temporary, there were many good men who would have to be out in that weather all night, and probably all the next day, doing service to such travellers as I was.

The ship arrived in the small hours of the morning, but I was not disturbed until daylight, finding that my baggage was all in its place, having been much more efficiently looked after than I could have managed myself had I sat up all night and worried about it. I was quite grieved to leave the beautiful place in such bad weather, but so full of sympathy

for all the zealous and self-effacing servants of the Company that I quite forgot any trifling discomforts of my own. And at breakfast-time I had settled down in my cosy cabin on board the handsome *Orinoco*, feeling now, as she gracefully glided down towards the Bocas, truly homeward bound.



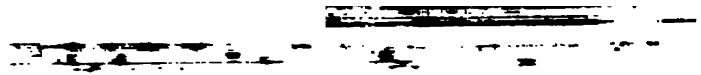
XVI

HOMEWARD BOUND

No doubt that first night, from Trinidad towards Barbados, was fraught with unpleasant experiences for many, especially those who were not experienced travellers. For the ship was very full, and the weather was so bad that going on deck was almost out of the question. But the stewards worked so well and cheerfully that, except for those uneasy souls who will be uncomfortable no matter what is done for them, there was nothing left to grumble at. This catering for passengers on board an ocean-going steamship is quite a science, but it requires for its application much hard work and good temper and patience, especially where, as in these vessels, several ports are touched at and the passengers are such a motley crew. For my part I found the arrangements wholly admirable, and I retired to my comfortable cabin full of satisfaction, although with the old feeling of compunction for those whose duties compelled them to face the blinding rain and opaque darkness of the



A Deck-passenger.



night, fully exposed and with every nerve tense, in anticipation of any possible danger to the ship and her helpless freight under their charge.

We arrived at Barbados at daybreak as usual, but in such weather as made it hard to realize that we were so near the Equator in the month of June. It was quite cold, blowing half a gale, and raining steadily, pitilessly. Altogether as cheerless a day as one would expect to find even in our much-maligned islands in late spring. And all things apparently conspired to delay us. For not only had the inter-colonial ships—which had all, as usual, arrived—brought heavy consignments of cargo for transhipment, but the *La Plata* arrived too, well ahead of her time, from home, and added to the trouble. It was an unpleasant send-off, and I deemed it my duty to speak words of comfort, as occasion served, to all complaining ones, many of whom actually suggested that this was the kind of weather we might expect to encounter all the way home to England. Quite daringly I predicted the finest of fine weather for next morning, without any hedging whatever, my hopeful vaticinations being received for the most part with stares and shrugs of utter incredulity.

At last we got away, and I confess that, in spite of my entirely optimistic attitude, I was quite relieved. For, there was no use disguising the fact, the incessant downpour of rain and the abnormal cold was most

depressing. Besides, it was impossible not to sympathize with the labours of officers and crew, and to avoid wondering what amount of damage would be done to the perishable cargo of fruit shipped under such distressing conditions. But inexorable time rolled on, the engines got into their sea-stride, the decks were cleared, and the passengers settled down, until night fell upon a well-ordered ship and a prospect of ten clear days without harbour worries.

When I came on deck in the morning at daylight my heart was glad within me. For what I had so hardily predicted had come to pass. The weather was absolutely perfect. There was a light Trade, just enough to ruffle the gorgeous azure of the sea, the sky was almost fleckless blue, and the great sun in all his golden splendour was flooding the atmosphere with living light. The air was almost as heady as wine; it filled one with the pure joy of being alive. And I had foretold it! Conceit urged me to remind all whom I met that I had endeavoured to comfort on the preceding miserable night of that important fact, and, emboldened by my success, to venture on a still more daring prophecy, namely, that this was the weather we should now enjoy all the way home. Let me rejoicingly say that this latter prediction, though quite unjustifiable from any meteorological point of view whatever, was also entirely successful, for from that day forward the weather remained perfect.

I am at a loss to know whether, when one is on a pleasure trip, the outward or the homeward passage is the pleasantest. Of course much depends upon the weather, for a succession of gales and bleak, cheerless days are always harder to bear when outward bound—when coming home we endure them, feeling that every day brings us nearer to comfort. But supposing the weather to be uniformly fine, as it usually is on these West Indian voyages, which passage is the most pleasurable? Outward, one is full of anticipation of the wonders of new scenes and new experiences, and if it is a first trip, of a curious, half-afraid feeling of venturesomeness, to coin an ugly word. But when the trip has been successfully accomplished, and the mind is almost a palimpsest of manifold impressions, the homeward passage gives time to sort those impressions out, and to anticipate the home-coming, full of importance as having travelled, full of delight at the prospect of again meeting all those whom the heart holds dear, and of seeing the dear mother-land again—ah, I think that there is nothing like being homeward bound. Perhaps my sea experience biases me considerably, but I have had much pleasure-trip experience also, and so far from making me *blasé* or careless of the prospect of again treading these beloved shores, I feel as eager as the veriest tyro. And, do you know, I am entirely unashamed of the fact. I have no patience

with the man who can return to his native land after an absence abroad, if of only a few weeks, and present an entirely indifferent attitude to her charms.

No, to my mind there are few pleasures comparable to the passage home from abroad in a fine steamship, with a crowd of passengers all on the best of terms with themselves and with one another, scanning the position-board in the lobby at noon each day with utmost eagerness, yet joyously dissimulating their intense desire to see old England's shores again. And how important does the voyager feel who is continually being consulted with an almost deferential air as to the best things to do in the way of sight-seeing, accommodation, etc., in London. Here, of course, I am in my element, and spend many a pleasant hour discoursing of the London I know so well. I have often felt how congenial an occupation it would be to act as a guide to a party of visitors to the great, grand old city. Unfortunately the professional guide is usually a clacking nuisance, yet some sort of a guide must be had by a stranger, or how can he or she get about? Of course we cannot all be of the same high rank in knowledge as the late Sir Walter Besant, whose acquaintance with the world's greatest metropolis was in the fullest sense of the term extensive and peculiar, but some of us (and I feel that I am one of the party) could, and

would, for the pure love of the work, "personally conduct" parties over London in thorough fashion.

But this looks as if I was meditating going into the guide business, and I am not. I am one of the *Orinoco's* passenger-list going home, and longing for the sight of the dear land as ardently as if I had been expatriated for as many years as I have days. I cannot for physical reasons indulge as I would in the violent exercises of youth—and beauty—but I can and do sit and beam upon the competitors benignantly. Those benevolent and self-sacrificing fellows who are always getting up bull-board tournaments, shuffle-board handicaps, egg-and-spoon races, etc., have only to come and touch me for a subscription to get it, on condition that I occupy my fit place of looker-on. "But why?" I hear some impatient reader say. "You have told us—pretty frequently too—that you are only forty-seven years of age, and surely you don't presume to claim the privileges of age?" Ferocious critic, I do! The sporting columns of the newspapers are to me of far less interest than those filled with advertisements. The only game I try to play, billiards, my father, who is a little older than I am, can give me sixty points in a hundred at, and even Mr. Horace Hutchinson cannot interest me in golf. I can sit on a bicycle, and on occasion ride twenty miles, if all the conditions are favourable, but a sportsman I am not, nor ever will be. Humiliating

confession, especially after my whaling experiences, you will say. Very well, I will agree, only asking you to remember that while I have had a few sporting adventures, they have been forced upon me, as it were, in my endeavour to live.

I will tell you a secret. The greatest enjoyment I know is to sit with a few entirely congenial friends, and talk. And an occasional song, if it be good and tastefully sung, with all the syllables clearly enunciated, is to me the most delightful of all pastimes. At the same time, I am not cynical enough, or fool enough, whichever way you like to put it, to make sarcastic remarks about those whose vigorous physique enables them to do such doughty deeds of sport as even Alpine climbing appears to be.

After this discursive digression I will return to the *Orinoco*, to remark that from daybreak to closing-time, when the Commander, in pursuance of his duties as the *censor morum*, warns young ladies spooning (I believe that is the term) in cosy corners not too well lighted, off the deck, as they had better not miss their beauty sleep, there is one incessant round of enjoyment. The promoters of games are indefatigable, and it seems as if the days, instead of being seventeen hours long, are only about half that length. Which is, indeed, a triumph, for the one criterion of a happy ship that appeals to passengers is that the trip seems so short. Fortunately for my reputation as a prophet, though I

doubt if any one now remembers the prophecy, the weather remains perfect, so perfect that I do not think that even our most nervous passengers longer realize that we are at sea. Even the smooth harmonic beat of the engines are unnoticed, although some of us are aware that they are being worked at their best gait in order to make up the time lost in thrusting across the Caribbean Sea towards Trinidad.

With one or two curious exceptions, the extremely mixed crowd that we carry as passengers have settled down to know each other, and to exchange ideas. There is something rather pathetic in the consideration of their eagerness and dread mingling. Eagerness to see what the wonderful England is like, and dread of new experiences which they think may be unpleasant. For many of them have never been out of their narrow little circle of interests in some far-away island before. There, despite the fact that they are "dark" people, they were magnates, leaders of local society, etc., and already they have discovered that they are but units in the great sum of humanity. Their ideas as to the reception they will meet with in England and France are, I am sorry to say, mostly biased by their knowledge of the reception they would certainly meet with in America, the United States, which, in spite of the Declaration of Independence, is not a comfortable country to visit for any man or woman, however cultured and far removed from the African negro, if

their skin be dark. The term "nigger" fits them all impartially, but is not, as might be expected, at all appreciated by them. I comfort them by telling them that in the one *free* country in the world, it is the *man* that counts, whatever his colour may be, and that the idea of the British king or his prime minister falling into popular disrepute because of his entertainment of a "coloured person" is unthinkable, not to be understood. We leave these discriminating niceties to a nation that is for ever shouting at the pitch of its voice that all men were created free and equal, and are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

So the time slips sweetly by, its passing hardly noticed, until one glorious morning the early risers greet the outposts of the Old World, the Azores, and, steaming closely past them, have ample opportunity of observing their beauties and hearing stories of the terrific sea-fights waged around them by Britain and Spain. The thrilling recital of Sir Richard Grenville's wonderful deed in the tiny *Revenge* is again brought forward, as it should be, to show of what mettle our forbears were made; then the counterblast comes in the shape of information, not to be denied, that the German is slowly, steadily, getting a grip of those beautiful islands for his long-laid plans of aggression.

But we are homeward bound, and may not make ourselves unhappy by the knowledge of Germany's



machinations. We are more interested to learn how the Black Octopus, stealthily extending its grip upon civilization, the Peril of the peace of the world, is faring in its conflict with the valiant bantling among nations, Japan. For a time this is the one topic of conversation, and I rejoice to know that without exception there are fervent wishes that the treaty-breaker, the conscienceless evader of right, and wholesale brigand, may receive such a lesson as may last her for a millennium. And I am not surprised to be asked what I think would be the attitude of a great number of English folk if Britain were the antagonist of Russia instead of Japan, and as Japan is, fighting for her life. Of course I have no hesitation at all in answering that there would certainly be a strong pro-Russian party in England, led by Mr. Stead, supplying the Russian Government with private news, and assuring Continental Powers that they only need to persevere long enough to bring the dear old land under the blessed rule of Holy Russia. The agitation would be backed by the benevolent pen of Madame Olga de Novikoff, whose letters—artless, ingenuous contributions to history—would appear in our leading English journals, proving conclusively that Russia only desired peace and the highest benefit to English-speaking people.

And then one morning we come on deck to see the beloved grey-green of the English Channel all around

us. Yes, and there—just a little on the port bow, is England. Dear old England. We forget everything else for joy that we are there, or so nearly there that some of us will in time-honoured fashion rush below, and, grabbing a bag, stand feverishly tapping one foot at the gangway as if we had only one minute to catch the train for London.

As we draw nearer the well-beloved shores, the channel mist, which has been veiling most of the summer beauty of Devon and Cornwall, gradually melts away, and the glorious sun shines forth as if to welcome these wanderers from the sultry isles with genial warmth that shall remind them, however faintly, of their own fervent climes. But there is here that lovely freshness in the morning air that makes one rejoice to be alive—it is like breathing ethereal wine, and goes straight to the brain. "Crash" goes the anchor, we have arrived at Plymouth, and the grand old town lies basking before us in the morning glow as fair to look upon as any place on earth can be. While the tender is coming we hear that, although there is but a handful of passengers for that port, the good ship is going to Cherbourg before making for her final port, Southampton. It does not take me long to decide, with a Great Western special awaiting the ship, what I will do. Much as I love the vessel, and comfortable as the trip has been, I do not want to go to France, I want to feel myself speeding London-

wards at sixty miles an hour, and feast my eyes on the gorgeous landscapes of the brave West Country.

The tender is as comfortable as a bridge, and fast withal, so that when once we have cast adrift from the *Orinoco's* side, we have but brief space for the waving farewells. But I gratefully admire her beautiful and graceful lines, remembering when she received the gold medal at the Fisheries Exhibition as being the handsomest model of any merchant ship afloat. And a pang of regret seizes me when I think that she is out of date, and that she must soon make way for more modern ships like the *Tagus*, which, with all her amazing roominess and comfort, cannot for a moment compare with the *Orinoco* in the matter of beauty. Good-bye, good ship, and good fellows of your crew, I shall never forget you.

Then suddenly, the wharf, and the kindly, almost perfunctory, ordeal of the custom-house examination, involving me in no trouble at all, since there is absolutely nothing abroad worth the smuggling into England. And then the train and a delightful journey up to London, full of gratitude for all the pleasures I have been permitted to enjoy so richly.

THE END



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